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Yemen says order restored in tribal area

ADEN (R) — Yemeni Interior Minister Hussein Arab said in remarks published on Saturday that order has been restored in a rugged tribal area where seven people were killed in clashes between the army and tribesmen. In the first official account of last week's clashes and casualties in the Rusud area, 120 kilometres northeast of Aden, Mr. Arab told the official 14 October daily that seven people were killed and 10 wounded. He said 20 people have surrendered and would be brought to justice. "The security situation in the area is back to normal after containing the problem and 20 of the culprits have surrendered and will be brought to justice," he added. Security sources last week said seven people, all from the government side, were killed in the violence and 20 people were wounded. Mr. Arab gave no breakdown of casualties. He denied that "security forces intend to disarm Yemeni tribes in the Rusud area," the newspaper said. "The security plan calls for collecting and taking delivery of heavy weapons in possession of some individuals. There is no concentration whatsoever on personal ordinary weapons," he said without elaborating.

Cabinet approves draft agreements

Amman (J.T.) - The Council of Ministers of Saturday approved the final drafts of a transport agreement and a civil aviation accord with Israel, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. The transport accord outlined procedures for Jordanian and Israeli vehicles entering each other's territory and for transportation of tourists and goods across the borders of the two countries. It also includes provisions for railway links between the two sides for passenger and cargo traffic and port and transit arrangements. The accord on civil aviation provides for direct air flights between the two countries and cooperation in aviation-related issues. The two agreements, along with three others, are expected to be signed this week. The accords are among the last to be signed as stipulated in the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty of October 1994.

Kabariti, Mirai head for Brussels

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Abul Hafez Mirai left Amman for Belgium Saturday to join a Jordanian delegation headed by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan which will on Sunday start negotiations in Brussels on a Jordanian-European partnership.

King Fahd's health improving — prince

RIYADH (AFP) — King Fahd of Saudi Arabia is recovering from the illness that has prevented him working in the past few weeks, the country's acting leader, Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz, said Saturday. Prince Abdullah told members of the national consultative council: "I want to assure you that, thanks to God, the king's health is constantly improving." The crown prince, 72, who was attending for the first time the opening of a new session of the council, set up in 1993, was asked by the king to take control of the affairs of state on Jan. 1 until he recovered. The king was in hospital from Nov. 29 to Dec. 7, suffering from the effects of overwork, according to officials. Prince Abdullah, the king's half brother, urged the council to "take inspiration" from King Fahd's directives on domestic and foreign policy.

Yemen frees 4 Egyptian fishermen

CAIRO (AFP) — Four Egyptian fishermen have returned home after being held in Yemen for eight months allegedly for fishing in Yemeni territorial waters, the government daily Al Ahram said Saturday. A group of 37 fishermen who were freed in October reported that four of their colleagues were still in jail, after they were all arrested by Yemeni police in April off the coast of Yemen. They maintained they had been mistreated and tortured. The last four returned late Friday and made no comments. They were all found guilty of fishing in Yemeni territorial waters, the two boats they were on were seized and they were ordered to pay a $3,000 fine for each of the boats.

Iran finds remains of 1,000 soldiers

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has found the remains of 1,000 of its soldiers and volunteer militiamen killed during the 1980-1988 war against Iraq, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported Saturday. A mass funeral is to be held Friday after the weekly Muslim prayers at Tehran University, it said. General Mir Feisal Bagherzadeh, the head of a search team for those missing in action (MiA), told IRNA that five of the bodies belonged to searchers who had recently been killed in the explosion of mines left over from the war in border regions with Iraq. Vast areas in western Iran bordering Iraq, are still strewn with mines, shells and other explosives despite the launch of numerous operations to clean up the fields. Hundreds have been killed in such blasts.

Moscow sets deadline for hostages

MOSCOW (R) — The head of Russia's state security set a deadline of 10. a.m. (0700 GMT) on Sunday for Chechen rebels to release more than 100 hostages. Interfax news agency reported on Saturday. Mikhail Barsukov, director of the Federal Security Service (FSB), told Interfax the gunmen would be punished if they harmed any of the captives. At the same time, he pledged to do everything possible to secure their release through talks. (see inside).

Peres and Assad seek peace accord in 1996, Christopher reports

Combined agency despatches

ISRAEL AND SYRIA are working to make 1996 the year of a comprehensive peace deal, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said here Saturday at the end of a shuttle between the two countries.

Mr. Christopher said after meeting Prime Minister Shimon Peres that the Israeli leader and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad were "determined to do the hard work necessary to reach a comprehensive peace this year."

"We have crossed an important threshold," he told a press conference. "We have a more meaningful dialogue."

Mr. Peres was also optimistic. "We have a feeling that things are going ahead," he said.

"We have established a dialogue that may lead to a real peace negotiation ... We have a partner, although there are some very serious problems left."

Mr. Christopher also acknowledged "some difficult challenges ahead" but said the decision to add military experts to the two countries' peace teams could clear the way for other experts to be included.

The secretary announced after talks with Mr. Assad in Damascus on Friday that a new round of Israeli-Syrian direct negotiations would start Jan. 24 outside Washington, in the presence of military experts.

Mr. Peres told Israeli television earlier that he had not changed his stand on the timing of elections, due Oct. 29, saying he would use the time to try and advance the peace process.

Last week, he raised the possibility of bringing forward the legislative polls to June 4.

Foreign Minister Ehud Barak, meanwhile, ruled out a peace settlement "at just any price" with Syria, warning that months of negotiations still lie ahead.

"We do not want a settlement at just any price with Syria. Our problems go back decades and very long months could still be needed," Mr. Barak said on Israeli radio.

"We must be patient," he said. "In any case, in an accord with Syria, we will not take risks affecting our security and water resources."

"I am not disappointed with the result (of the Christopher shuttle). But, no doubt, we will know the Syrian position better after Christopher's next tour of the Middle East," Mr. Barak said.

In Prague, Israeli President Ezer Weizman said on Friday he doubted a final agreement could be completed with Syria before Israel holds general elections in October.

Speaking during a state visit to the Czech republic, Mr. Weizman said he hoped the U.S.-brokered peace process would bear fruit, but it would probably take some time.

"I doubt very much that by October we could have a full peace agreement," Mr. Weizman told a news conference.

Mr. Weizman noted that the atmosphere with Syria was currently more cordial than at a similar time prior to the 1979 peace agreement with Egypt.

He said it was difficult then for Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to be the first Arab leader to make peace with Israel, and it would be hard for Mr. Assad to do so now.

"Sadat had great difficulties because he was the first one, Assad because he is the last one," Mr. Weizman said.

In his statements on Saturday, Mr. Barak commented on the decision to expand the negotiations by bringing in military experts.

"There is progress and the progress is slow and measured, because this is a conflict that has lasted already for decades and has taken a very heavy death toll," he said.

"It involves vital interests of the highest order for both sides and there is no way to solve a conflict like this from one visit by Christopher to another or from one weekly news broadcast to another."

Negotiations that resumed with new vigour last month after four years with no results will continue later this month in the United States.

Syria demands Israel withdraw from the Golan Heights it seized in 1967. Israel has indicated it would consider

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His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday receives General Dennis Joe Reimer, chief-of-staff of the United States Army (Petra photo)

King meets U.S. Army chief

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein conferred at the Royal Court on Saturday with General Dennis Joe Reimer, chief-of-staff of the United States Army, who arrived in Amman earlier in the day on a brief visit to Jordan.

Discussions covered Jordanian-U.S. relations and cooperation in defence affairs, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted the U.S. general as saying.

Gen. Reimer told Petra the U.S. understands Jordan's military needs and the Kingdom's quest to modernise its weapons in a manner that would enable it to assume its role in maintaining peace and ensuring security and stability in the region.

Gen. Reimer, who is currently on a tour of several countries in the region, also met Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and discussed topics of concern to the armed forces in the two countries and U.S. military assistance to the Jordanian Armed Forces, Petra said.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry announced last week that the U.S. will provide a package military assistance to Jordan including a squadron of F-16 fighter bombers, upgraded tanks as well as other military equipment to help modernise the Jordanian Armed Forces.

Mr. Perry said the package would be paid for by a special draw-down funds that has already been authorised and allocations for Jordan in the U.S. foreign military assistance programme.

Yemen 'keen' to end island dispute

ADEN (R) — Yemen said on Saturday it was keen to settle a dispute with Eritrea over Red Sea islands and to protect international shipping lanes there.

The official SABA news agency said Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi had discussed the crisis in Sanaa on Saturday with Francis Juttman, a special envoy of French President Jacques Chirac.

Mr. Hadi "renewed Yemen's welcome of the French mediation reaffirming Yemen's readiness to ensure the success of all mediations...," SABA said.

Last week, Mr. Chirac sent a message to President Ali Abdullah Saleh offering Paris' help in defusing the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea.

The sovereignty conflict erupted into fierce clashes last month on the Hanish Al Kabir island, killing at least 12 people.

Diplomats say oil and tourism interests are fuelling the dispute over the islands, located amid vital shipping lanes.

France has a large military presence and a naval base across from Yemen in Djibouti. Its Total S.A. oil firm is involved in a multi-billion-dollar project to export gas from Yemen and has oil exploration projects there.

Mr. Hadi told Mr. Juttman that Yemen was ready for a settlement "ensuring a just solution, guaranteeing Yemen's sovereignty over its territories, protecting the safety of international navigation in the Red Sea and reinforcing stability and peace in the region," SABA said.

Ethiopia, the main mediator in the dispute, said earlier this month Eritrea and Yemen had agreed in principle to withdraw their forces from the disputed group of Hanish islands, but that details have to be worked out.

Diplomats said the Ethiopian proposals were based on Eritrean withdrawal from Hanish Al Kabir and Yemeni withdrawal from the nearby Zuqar island.

Obstacles to a settlement revolve around which side should withdraw first and when, the diplomats added.

Egypt, another mediator in the conflict, has strong interests in keeping Red Sea shipping lanes open to traffic using the Suez Canal.

Christopher praises Arafat measures against extremism

EREZ CROSSING, Gaza (Agencies) — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher won a fresh commitment from Yasser Arafat on Saturday to stem political violence by Palestinian groups and hailed "important steps" the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader had taken.

"I was very pleased this morning to have Chairman Arafat emphasise his complete commitment to combatting terrorism in all the territories of the West Bank and Gaza," Mr. Christopher said after a one-hour meeting with Mr. Arafat in Gaza.

Mr. Christopher is on a Middle East shuttle aimed at pushing forward negotiations between Syria and Israel.

"The chairman has been speaking out against terrorism and has been taking very important steps to work with authorities in the region to ensure that violence and terrorism shall be kept to a minimum," he told a news conference.

Mr. Arafat urged Mr. Christopher to help resolve problems with Israel in the flashpoint West Bank town of Hebron.

"We asked the secretary of state to facilitate a solution for the problems we have with the Israelis in Hebron and other places," said Mr. Arafat, who also urged him to pressure donors to give promised aid.

Hebron, where 400 Jewish settlers live in the centre of the town surrounded by 120,000 Palestinians, is due to come under partial Palestinian control in March but Israeli troops will remain to protect the settlers.

Mr. Arafat, questioned by reporters on the attitude of the militant Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) towards Palestinian elections due on Jan. 20, said: "The Hamas leaders have declared from the beginning that they will not participate officially but many Islamic leaders from Gaza and West Bank participate."

Mr. Christopher said: "It is important that the elections be free and fair."

Former Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon meanwhile charged in a Jerusalem Post article on Friday that Mr. Arafat had "consistently broken" his commitment to stop Palestinian acts of violence that had killed 162 people since 1993.

A U.S. State Department report last month found that Mr. Arafat's moves had helped to avert violence although it criticised him for appearing to support guerrilla actions in some speeches to Palestinian audiences.

Mr. Arafat did not mention the issue at the news conference and evaded a question about last week's assassination of Yahya Ayyash, a master bombmaker for the Hamas movement.

The exploding cellphone that killed Ayyash is widely assumed to have been planted by Israeli intelligence agents. Israel declines to officially comment on its responsibility.

Hamas has carried out several suicide bomb attacks in the past two years, killing scores of Israelis.

Mr. Arafat said only that his previous statement on the issue, accusing Israel of the killing, had been "clear and obvious."

His meeting with Mr. Christopher at a Palestinian VIP centre about 100 metres south of the Erez crossing with Israel, focused largely on the Jan. 20 elections.

Mr. Christopher called the elections, which will be monitored by international observers including an American team led by former President Jimmy Carter, a "historic opportunity" for the Palestinians but said they must be free and fair.

The two men also discussed Western aid to the Palestinians, the topic of a conference in Paris last Tuesday which Mr. Christopher was forced to miss because snowstorms in the United States prevented his departure.

Mr. Arafat thanked Mr. Christopher for continuing U.S. economic support for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The United States has already disbursed more than half of a $500 million aid pledge over five years.

Arrangements for the Christopher-Arafat meeting were only finalised on Friday night due to problems over the venue.

U.S. officials were reluctant to go to Gaza City because of tensions following Ayyash's killing but finally compromised on the VIP centre only a minute away from Israeli territory.

Hamas meanwhile accused senior PLO police officers of assisting Israeli intelligence in killing Ayyash.

"Evidence indicates the involvement of some leaders in the Palestinian self-rule authority's security apparatus in the incident who succeeded in finding out the location of the martyr," Hamas said in a statement.

"This is a warning to people so be warned," it said.

Ayyash's death came after Hamas and the PNA had reached an understanding on halting attacks at least until the Jan. 20 elections.

"It is truly unfortunate that the incident of Ayyash's assassination came after a series of talks held by Hamas movement's delegation with the delegation of the Palestinian (National) Authority in Cairo," Hamas said.

Hamas called on Palestinians to boycott the elections for an 88-member Palestinian legislative council and for president of the executive branch.

The call to boycott elections contradicted an understanding with the PNA reached in Cairo in December

Clinton's visit celebrates U.S.-brokered Bosnia deal

Combined agency despatches

PRESIDENT BILL Clinton, celebrating the Bosnian peace he helped to craft, inspected U.S. troops serving with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) enforcement mission on Saturday and lauded them as heroes.

In Zagreb Mr. Clinton and his Croatian counterpart Franjo Tudjman also agreed to settle problems between the Muslim and Croat communities in the Bosnian town of Mostar by "American arbitration," a senior Croatian official said.

In Tuzla, Mr. Clinton told U.S. troops he was proud of them and their "historic mission" in Bosnia, defending "U.S. values" in Europe.

Arriving several hours late in Tuzla via Taszar in Hungary, Mr. Clinton told a group of 850 U.S. troops they were "warriors for peace," working together with former Warsaw Pact adversaries to give peace a chance in a war-ravaged country where nearly four years of war had risked destabilising all of Europe.

"I come with a simple message: Your country is very proud of you," Mr. Clinton — dressed in a flak jacket, with a tank parked behind him — told the soldiers gathered on the airbase tarmac to hear his message.

"We know that you are the best-trained, best-equipped, best-prepared fighters in the world... but to Bosnia, you came on a mission of peace, a mission for heroes," said Mr. Clinton, who flew home after visting Croatia later in the day.

"We thank you for defending our nation's values and our nation's interests. We thank you for helping the Bosnian people... We thank you for being warriors for peace," he said.

Mr. Clinton, who made an earlier stopover at Aviano in Italy, also said he had created a special medal — the Armed Forces' Service Medal — for U.S. troops serving in significant non-combat missions, such as peacekeeping.

All those deployed in Bosnia would receive it, he said.

The former warring factions in Bosnia know that U.S. "aircraft are patrolling high above the clouds, tracking the smallest movements; that out in the Adriatic, the navy and marine corps are ready to project at a moments' notice; that just above the tree tops, the army's Apache gunships are scouring the ground below. Our special forces are here, there and everywhere.

"You can see from this operation that America looks out for its own," he told the troops.

At the end of his visit, Mr. Clinton flew into Zagreb and met President Tudjman.

In radio remarks broadcast at home in the United States, Mr. Clinton said NATO peacekeeping was giving Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs a chance to rebuild their country.

"I am convinced that the overwhelming majority of Bosnia's people agree that the alternative of return to the sorrow and suffering of the past four years must not be allowed to happen," he added.

The difficulties besetting the NATO mission were underlined by a surge of tension on Friday in the Usora region just 50 kilometres west

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Qouriea assails Israeli curb on Jerusalem rally

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — A key candidate in the Palestinian elections protested at actions of Israeli border guards at a Fateh campaign rally in Jerusalem on Saturday, warning the Jan. 20 polling date could be in danger.

"I am worried about the date for our elections... They are posing a serious obstacle to the election," said Ahmad Qouriea, heading the list of the mainstream Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) faction in East Jerusalem.

"The army is everywhere stopping the people. They cannot come," he told journalists as he stepped into his BMW after addressing a crowd of around 300 people at the YMCA hotel.

Mr. Qouriea, a chief autonomy negotiator and economy minister in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) before resigning to run for the self-rule council elections, charged the actions violated Israel's agreements with the PLO.

Border guards in jeeps blocked access for cars to the rally site, and the meeting was hurriedly moved indoors when police refused to allow it to go ahead at a school football ground across the road.

"The Palestinians are not allowed to carry out political rallies except in closed place," said Israeli police spokesman Eric Bar-Chen.

"Police informed them they were not allowed to do so and if they wanted to carry on with the rally it would have to be indoors. They agreed to go inside and the rally went on with police permission inside the YMCA," said Mr. Bar-Chen.

Addressing 200 people inside the YMCA, Mr. Qouriea said:

"This is a violation of the agreement which guarantees freedom of elections. The army is trying to put obstacles before the Fateh list of candidates, preventing free campaigning."

"Where is this Israeli democracy."

East Jerusalem is in itself a contentious issue between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Palestinians agreed to Israeli restrictions on elections in Jerusalem, where Palestinians will vote but will not live under the Palestinian administration.

With only a week to go before the elections in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip, several candidates running in this city have complained of Israeli meddling in their campaign.

Hanan Ashrawi, former spokeswoman for the Palestinians at the star of the peace process, is among candidates to have had campaign cars turned back from the city limits because election posters were plastered on the side.

"The occupation authorities will not allow us to hold one meeting properly in our city. Is this freedom of expression, of speech, of being able to put up posters?" asked Mr. Qouriea, who was escorted by two guards.

"Jerusalem is our capital, we have the right to it, no matter what they say," he added, to loud applause from the crowd inside the hotel.

Several international observers were in the YMCA hall, along with foreign TV crew.

Palestinian election officials said Israeli police have been tearing down posters in East Jerusalem, authorising only 34 bill boards to be used. Candidates have to seek permission from police each time to hold meetings.

The turnout for Saturday's gathering was disappointing for Fateh, whose leader and head of the Palestinian National Authority, Yasser Arafat, is expected to trounce his lone challenger, a 72-year-old grandmother, in a presidential vote.

A separate poll is to be held for an 88-member self-rule council.

Hundreds of Palestinians marched in El Bireh on Saturday in support of 25 prisoners on hunger strike in an Israeli jail, Palestinian sources said.

The prisoners have barricaded themselves into their cells in the Telmond jail, north of Tel Aviv, and have

(Continued on page 7)

Mestiri set to renew Afghan peace effort

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — U.N. special envoy Mahmoud Mestiri plans a round of shuttle diplomacy, with a ceasefire high on his agenda, aimed at brokering a peace settlement through negotiations among the Afghan factions.

Mr. Mestiri told AFP on Saturday he intends to travel to Kabul Sunday for talks with Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, followed by a trip to the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan.

"A kind of ceasefire, formal or de facto, is needed to put them (factions) to talks," Mr. Mestiri said.

The Taliban forces currently besieging Kabul have vowed to oust Mr. Rabbani and enforce Islamic Sharia law in the whole of Afghanistan, of which about half is now controlled by them.

Mr. Mestiri returned here overnight after an absence of about a month and a half, during which he briefed U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali on his previous unsuccessful bid to secure a peaceful power transfer in Kabul.

He said before his departure for Kabul he would be meeting here with several Afghans — apparently representatives of factions opposed to the beleaguered Afghan president.

The U.N. mediator also plans to hold talks in the days ahead with Pakistani officials.

Mr. Mestiri sounded cautiously optimistic on the prospects for progress towards a negotiated peace in the war-torn country.

There had been a "kind of evolution" since his last visit to the region and events are showing the necessity of having some kind of solution through negotiations rather than through military means," he said.

In November, his plan calling for transfer of authority to a 28-member council made up of factional representatives and other Afghans was rejected as unacceptable by the anti-Rabbani camp including the Talibans.

Around 20,000 people have been killed in Kabul alone in the more than three-year-old civil war that has been raging in Afghanistan since the mujahedeen took over Kabul after the fall of the communist regime in April 1992.

Mr. Rabbani last month offered to travel to the provincial strongholds of rivals for peace talks. His move failed to take off as the opposition groups insisted on his resignation prior to opening any negotiations.

A four-point peace plan proposed in Kabul earlier this week by former Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masoud has also been rejected by the rivals on the same ground.

Mr. Masoud called for a ceasefire, the opening of highways, the exchange of prisoners and a start to negotiations.

The plan has been termed a "step backward" by Pakistan, its relations strained with Kabul since the Sept. 6 burning of the Pakistani embassy in the Afghan capital by a mob over alleged support by Islamabad for the Talibans.

Meanwhile, Afghan opposition sources here denied Pakistani press reports that negotiations were underway in Islamabad between the Talibans and a four-party Afghan opposition coalition.

The major players in the coalition are the National Islamic Movement headed by Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum and the Hezb-e-Islami of former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

CHRISTOPHER IN GAZA: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Saturday shows the way to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to a press conference following talks between the two men in the Gaza Strip near the Erez crossing point between Israel and the Palestinian self-rule territory (see story on page one) (AFP photo)

1996 is crucial for Cyprus – Denktash

NICOSIA (AFP) — The leader of Turkish-held northern Cyprus, Rauf Denktash said on Friday that 1996 would be a make-or-break year for brokering a resolution to end the Mediterranean island's 21-year division.

"I promised my people that I would do my utmost to make 1996 the year of settlement by telling the world that everything that is legal for a settlement... will be on the negotiating table," Mr. Denktash said.

"The party that is running away from this... is the Greek-Cypriot side," Mr. Denktash said during his annual news conference for foreign reporters.

The president of the self-proclaimed Turkish republic of northern Cyprus, which is only recognised by Ankara, made the comments as the United States was preparing to make a big push in February to reach a settlement in Cyprus.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, who brokered a peace deal for Bosnia in November, may visit both the Turkish and Greek sides of the island next month to try to hammer out some type of an accord.

"I hope the big push is in the right direction, because if it is in the wrong direction nothing will happen," Mr. Denktash said, referring to Mr. Holbrooke's visit.

The Turkish-Cypriot leader said he had been told the U.S. envoy would be on a fact-finding mission, and would present no maps or any potential federation in Cyprus.

But a U.S. official cautioned in Washington on Thursday that the trip was conditional on the administration's assessment that a visit by the envoy to the island would yield results.

Mr. Denktash said he is proposing a federation of two sovereign communities with a common international representation and foreign policy.

"The problem that Turkish Cypriots face and have faced over the last 35 years is to no longer be dominated by Greek Cypriots," he said.

He again invited Greek Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides to the negotiating table.

"We last met in October 1994... and he has refused since to talk with me," said Mr. Denktash, who has been the Turkish-Cypriot leader for the past 30 years. "We cannot get anything done with intermediaries."

But Mr. Clerides later rejected the call, saying: "Our position remains that for direct talks to be constructive there must be common ground on the basic aspects of the Cyprus problem."

He said without such a common understanding any face to face negotiation would be in vain, according to the Cyprus News Agency.

"When Denktash finds himself in a difficult situation and is forced to change his position he invites the Greek Cypriot side to direct negotiations," the Cypriot president added.

He also said that Mr. Holbrooke was expected to visit the island after Feb. 15.

Cyprus has been divided since July 1974 when Turkey sent troops to seize the northern third of the island following a coup in Nicosia backed by a military junta then ruling Greece. The Turkish Cypriots declared their own state in 1983.

Sudan wants Security Council meeting on Ethiopia skirmishes

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Sudan has asked the Security Council to call an urgent meeting on what it called armed aggression from neighbouring Ethiopia.

In a letter to the council late on Friday, Sudan's foreign minister, Ali Osman Mohammad Taha, cited four conflicts since Dec. 23 along the two countries' long common border.

"I request that the esteemed Security Council take the necessary measures to ensure that Ethiopia cease its aggression against the territories of Sudan and compensate the victims of its aggression," Mr. Taha said in the letter.

"I further request that an urgent meeting of the Security Council be called to consider ways and means to stop the Ethiopian aggression against Sudan," he added.

Mr. Taha's letter came only days before the council considers Ethiopia's demand that Sudan extradite three men it says were involved in the assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Sudan denies the charge.

Gunmen aimed at the president last June as he arrived in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa for a summit meeting of the Organisation of African Unity. Mr. Mubarak was unhurt.

Sudan's neighbours, including Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Egypt, have become increasingly worried about the Khartoum government's alleged backing of foreign groups and training camps for guerrillas.

In turn, Sudan's long-running civil war between the Arabic-speaking Islamic north and the rebel Christian or animist south has spilled over the country's southern and eastern borders. Sudan has previously accused Ethiopian, Eritrean and Ugandan troops of supporting the rebels.

Specifically, the Sudanese forein minister in his letter to the Security Council alleged that:

— On Dec. 23, the Ethiopian army attacked a border garrison between Khor Shein and Wad Koly, killing an officer and five soldiers and wounding two others.

— On Dec. 27, heavy artillery and an Ethiopian fighter plane attacked the frontier Basalam area along Sudan's western border with Ethiopia.

— On Dec. 28, the Ethiopian army occupied the border area of Hamrayat Al Rahad "using massive force."

— On Jan. 1, Ethiopia attacked another border point near Al Allaw on the Siteet River and occupied it.

It was not clear yet what the 15-member council, which this year includes Egypt, would do.

So far non-aligned states on the council have supported Ethiopia and Egypt, diplomats said. But they said Russia was still reluctant to get the council involved in the Mubarak assassination attempt controversy.

Displaced to be taken home

More than 7,000 Sudanese families displaced by civil war will be moved in the next few days from camps in the Sudanese capital here back to their homes in southern and western Sudan, the Al Sudan Al Hadeith daily said Saturday.

Quoting the director general of the displaced affairs administration, Ismail Mustafa, the report said the 7,000 families had all expressed a desire to return to their native regions permanently and their home states had shown willingness to receive them.

Carbomb defused in Beirut

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese security forces on Saturday defused a booby-trapped van parked near the office of an Islamic fundamentalist deputy and loaded with enough explosives to cause carnage in Beirut, police said.

The van, packed with a device composed of an anti-tank rocket, plastic explosive and a detonator, was parked 200 metres (yards) from the office of Adnan Trabulsi, a deputy and member of a pro-Syrian Islamic charity.

It was also near a popular vegetable market and could have caused a large number of casualties, police said.

Mr. Trabulsi is a member of the Islamic Charitable Projects Association, a pro-Syrian group whose secretary general, Sheikh Nazir Halabi, was assassinated on Aug. 31.

Five people accused of his murder, two Palestinians and three Lebanese who are all members of a rival fundamentalist group, are awaiting trial.

But the man accused of masterminding Halabi's murder, a Palestinian known as Abu Mahjan, is holed up with a hundred armed men in the 'Ain Al Hilweh refugee camp in South Lebanon, according to the Lebanese authorities.

Mr. Trabulsi's group, known as Habashists, are in conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood and a group of Lebanese followers of Wahabism, the official doctrine of Saudi Arabia.

There have been repeated clashes between the Habashists and Muslim Brothers in the northern city of Tripoli, Beirut and Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Asians top converts to Islam in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Expatriates from the Philippines and other South Asian countries topped the list of people converting to Islam in the Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi in 1995, an official report said Saturday. The report by the Abu Dhabi Islamic Court showed Filipinos, Sri Lankans and Indians accounted for 80 per cent of the 265 converts, who included 186 women. It said 120 Filipinos, including 93 females, embraced Islam last year while there were 49 converts from Sri Lanka and 42 from India. The other converts included people from China, Canada, the United States, Britain, Russia, Georgia, Ethiopia, Peru, Greece, and Venezuela. The report, published in Al Khaleej daily, did not identify their previous religion but court sources said they had been Christians and Buddhists Abu Dhabi, with a population of around 800,000, is the biggest and wealthiest member of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where Asians and other foreigners account for nearly two thirds of the 2.37 million population.

18 Iranian fishermen missing in storm

TEHRAN (AFP) — Eighteen fishermen were missing on Saturday after they were caught in a violent storm in the northern Gulf as snow fell on desert areas of Iran for the first time in 50 years. The cold snap, which has seen snow falling for three days throughout much of Iran, has closed airports and led to electricity cuts and bread and water rationing in some regions, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said. The fishermen have been missing since Friday in the waters off the southern port of Bushehr, it reported. Airports, at Shiraz and Esfahan, in southern and central Iran where temperatures have dropped to -2 Celsius (28 Fahrenheit), were forced to close on Friday amid a fierce snow storm which has hit the areas since Thursday. Heavy snow of up to 50 centimetres has even hit flat and barren regions in central and sotuhern Iran such as Yazd, Kerman and Zahedan. In Shiraz, the main city in Fars province, electricity was cut off and bread and drinking water were rationed and almost half of the trees in the city were flattened under the weight of snow, which was still falling on Saturday. Aroaund two metres of snow accumulated around the foot of Zagros mountain range in southwestern Iran.

Police arrest car thieves in Baghdad

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi police have arrested five people accused of killing an official and stealing 36 cars, the government newspaper Al Jumhoriya reported on Saturday. The paper, quoting a senior police officer, said the gang was arrested following several reported muggings in the capital Baghdad. "They were all captured... after one wounded member was taken into custody," Lieutenant-Colonel Faisal Shaheen, director of the anti-crime squad, told the paper. He said the thieves had killed Sabeeh Atwan, a director-General at the Ministry of Industry and Minerals and stolen his car. The paper gave the names of the thieves and printed their pictures, a rare practice in the official Iraqi press. Theft and burglary are widespread in Iraq. Residents rarely leave their homes unattended even during the day and car owners chain their vehicles in private garages.

Millon visits Kuwait today

KUWAIT (R) — France's Defence Minister Charles Millon will visit 1991 Gulf war ally Kuwait on Sunday for talks with senior officials, diplomats said. His visit coincides with next week's fifth anniversary of the start of the war to force Iraqi troops out of Kuwait. Earlier on Saturday, Britain's Defence Secretary Michael Portillo arrived in Kuwait for one day of talks. The French minister will discuss bilateral and defence issues during the two-day visit, planned since December. France's main arms deal with Kuwait since the war was in 1995 for eight missile patrol boats worth about $500 million.

Misery journey ends for Sweden's expelled Kurds

STOCKHOLM (R) — Two Kurdish families expelled from Sweden arrived in Ankara on Saturday after a 24-hour journey marked by violent protests, bureaucratic hitches and the breakdown of the plane chartered for their deportation.

The aircraft was delayed for several hours on Friday evening at the airport in the Hungarian capital of Budapest when it was discovered permission for landing in Turkey had not been applied for.

The flight was resumed a few hours later but the turboprop aircraft was forced to land at Bucharest when a door developed a fault in Romanian airspace.

The 11 deportees — two adults and nine children — arrived at around noon in the Turkish capital in a replacement aircraft chartered from a Romanian airline, more than 24 hours after the start of their journey.

Back in Sweden, police abandoned their search for three other members of the two families — both called Sincari — after the media reported the men had been hidden by villagers in the tiny community of Asele in Lappland, where the families had lived for five years.

The two family fathers and a son aged 18 disappeared before the expulsion order, which was issued at government level, could be carried out.

The deportation was meant to end the painful five-year saga of the two families, who fled to Sweden from south-eastern Turkey and settled in Asele, claiming they were Iraqi Kurds.

Investigations by Swedish immigration authorities later revealed the Turkish origin of the Sincaris, and the two related families were deprived of their refugee status and ordered out.

The families appealed against the decision, taking refuge in the local church for 15 months when the appeal was rejected, returning to their homes only when a fresh appeal was launched on humanitarian grounds.

The families became popular members of the local community and villagers scuffled with police who came to evict them after the government on Thursday night rejected a final appeal.

Two policemen and a teenage girl were slightly injured in the fracas that broke out when the family was being taken to a hotel. The refugees wept as they were pushed onto a bus.

Two small Sincari children were taken from their school bus by police directly to the hotel and not allowed to return to their homes before being taken to the plane.

The expulsion was widely condemned here by human rights groups, church representatives and politicians of all parties.

Child psychologists say the children of the two families, including two born in Sweden, could be permanently scarred by the upheaval.

Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson on Friday defended the expulsion, accusing the parents of manipulating their children.

"It was the correct decision. If they had been allowed to stay it would have given a signal to other families to exploit their children to be allowed to stay in Sweden," he said.

Sweden, once one of Europe's most welcoming countries for refugees, has tightened its policies in the last two years.

Kok arrives in Damascus

DAMASCUS (R) — Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok arrived in Damascus on Saturday to discuss the Middle East peace process and economic cooperation between Syria and the Netherlands, officials said.

They said Mr. Kok, accompanied by an official delegation, was to hold talks with Syrian Prime Minister Mahmoud Al Zuobi and President Hafez Al Assad.

A Dutch official said Mr. Kok's talks would also cover ways of boosting economic and trade cooperation with Syria and the possibilities of Dutch participation in investments in Syria.

He said that might include transport and tourism in addition to other economic sectors.

Mr. Kok is visiting Syria as part of a regional tour which will also take him to Jordan and Israel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
14:00 .. .. The Flintstones
14:30 .... Droopy Master Detective
15:00 ..... Family Penthouse
15:10 .... Mac and Mutley
15:30 . Pugwall's Summer
16:00 .... Voyagers
17:00
Children's Programme — C'Est Pas Sorcier
17:30 .. .. Fruits Et Legumes
18:00 .. .. Doc. — L'Integrale
9:00 ..... News in French
19:15
Magazine — Sports Et Musique
19:30 . ... News Headlines
19:35
Comedy — Are You Being Served
20:00 . ... Cinema, Cinema
20:25 The Bold and the Beautiful
21:10 Doc. Women and the World
22:00 .... News in English
21:35 ..... Heartbeat
22:25 .... Counterstrike
23:15 .. The American Chart Show
23:59 ..... Series — Stay Lucky

PRAYER TIMES

05:10 . .. . Fair
06:32 ..... (Sunrise) Duha
11:44 .... Dhuhr
14:33 ..... 'Asr
16:57 ..... Maghreb
18:18 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swelfieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanets Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It is expected to be sunny with temperatures rising slightly and winds easterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman ..... 2 / 13
Aqaba ..... 6 / 20
Deserts ..... −1/ 13
Jordan Valley ..... 6 / 20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 11, Aqaba 19 Humidity readings: Amman 57 per cent, Aqaba 26 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Isam Al Asmar 890504
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab 758848
Dr. Khaldoun Asfour 666873
Dr. Awni Hawamdeh 832350
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 630055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairouyh pharmacy 623672
Najih pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Alquds pharmacy ..... (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Muhannad Abdul Salam 984549
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0102301
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akilch Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhus, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 6672270
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 607155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital ..... (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital ..... (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital ..... (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital ..... (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:30 ..... Bangkok (RJ)
08:00 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
08:35 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
08:55 .... Larnaca (RJ)
09:20 ..... Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:55 .... Dubai, Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 .... Beirut (RJ)
10:15 ..... . Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:00 ..... Brussels, Paris (RJ)
17:00 . ..... New Delhi (add) (RJ)
17:45 ..... London (RJ)
18:00 ..... Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:25 ..... Athens (RJ)
18:45 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
20:50 ..... Vienna, Rome (RJ)
22:45 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
00:10 ..... Cairo (RJ)
04:00 ..... Tunis (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

10:30 ..... Sanaa (IY)
12:40 ..... Bahrain (GF)
14:00 ..... Doha (Q7)
14:30 .. .. Moscow (SU)
20:10 ..... Beirut (ME)
20:20 ..... Cairo (MS)
23:10 ..... Istanbul (TK)
23:59 ..... London, Beirut (BA)
01:25 ..... Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:00 ..... New Delhi (add) (RJ)
05:30 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
06:15 ... . Beirut (RJ)
08:50 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
11:00 ..... Vienna, Rome (RJ)
11:25 ..... Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15 ..... Athens (RJ)
20:10 ..... Cairo (RJ)
20:15 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
20:30 ..... Tunis (add) (RJ)
21:30 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:20 ..... New Delhi (RJ)
21:45 ..... Damascus (RJ)
22:00 ..... Jakarta (RJ)
22:15
New Delhi, Singapore, Kula Lumpur (add) (RJ)
22:40 ..... Bangkok (RJ)
22:45 ..... Sanaa (RJ)

Other flights (Terminal 2)

07:45 ..... Beirut (ME)
11:30 ..... Sanaa (IY)
13:30 ..... Doha (GF)
15:00 ..... Doha (Q7)
16:05 ..... Moscow (SU)
21:10 ..... Cairo (MS)
02:25 ..... Amsterdam (KL)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/ 500
Banana	660/600
Banana (Mukammar)	600/600
Banana (imported)	860/700
Cabbage	80 / 50
Carrot	210/120
Cauliflower	120/50
Cucumbers (large)	100/ 50
Cucumbers (small)	220 / 150
Eggplant	180/ 120
Garlic	850/600
Grape Fruit	220/150
Lemon	300/200
Marrow (large)	80/ 50
Marrow (small)	130 / 70
Onion (green)	160/100
Onion (dry)	200/ 150
Orange	430/300
Pepper (hot)	400 / 300
Pepper (sweet)	420/300
Radish	150/80
String Beans	500 / 400
Tomato	130/80

Srour receives Djibouti house speaker, sees off Algerian parliamentarian

AMMAN (Petra) — Lower House of Parliament Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour on Saturday received at the Parliament House Speaker of Djibouti's National Assembly Saeed Ibrahim Badoul.

The two reviewed the outcome of the Afro-Arab Dialogue Conference, which concluded in Amman Wednesday and the extraordinary meeting of the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) convened in Amman Thursday.

They also discussed bilateral ties, especially in parliamentary fields, and means of enhancing them.

Mr. Badoul commended Jordanian efforts aiming at mending Arab fences.

In another development, Speaker of the Algerian Transitional National Assembly Abdul Qader Saleh left Amman Saturday after taking part in the two meetings.

Mr. Saleh, who was seen off at the airport by Mr. Srour, said the Arab-African conference was successful, adding that the meeting's timing was opportune since Afro-Arab relations were not up to the required levels at the present time.

Sa'd Hayel Srour

In a pre-departure statement, Mr. Saleh commended the outcome of the conference and attributed its success to "the excellent" preparations by Jordan.

Mr. Saleh was earlier received by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, who discussed with him Jordanian-Algerian relations.

Senate endorses 1996 draft budget

AMMAN (Petra)— The Upper House of Parliament, the Senate, Saturday unanimously endorsed the JD 1,745 million draft budget law for 1996.

The endorsement was recommended by the Senate's Finance Committee and came only one week after the endorsement of the draft budget by the Lower House of Parliament.

In the report it submitted on the draft budget, the committee voiced support for the general principles and policies adopted by the government with the declared aim of reducing the budget deficit, imposing stricter control on government's capital spending and encouraging investment and exports as well as providing subsidies to some basic commodities.

The committee noted with satisfaction the government's reduction of the budget deficit to 4..8 per cent from the 5.8 per cent estimated in the 1995 budget. It also expressed support for the economic reform programme, which helped to reduce Jordan's overall foreign debts to $5900 million by the end of November 1995. The committee expressed hope that the volume of domestic debts will be reduced from JD 1089 million to JD 837 million this year.

The report voiced satisfaction with the package of economic laws introduced by the government concerning income tax, and supported the government's policies aimed at "enabling Jordan to attain self-sufficiency." But it said that this goal cannot be achieved unless Jordan's revenues from exports are sufficient to cover the cost of imports and the interest on foreign debts.

The report noted that 37 per cent of the total Jordanian workforce is employed by the public sector, saying that this high percentage reflects the existence of masked unemployment, which in turn leads to imbalances in the local labour market on the one hand and causes an increase in the government's current expenditure on the other.

The report supported the Minister of Finance's statement during a meeting with the Senate's Finance Committee that the government appoint only half of the number of employees in posts made vacant and that the government refrain from creating new jobs in its offices in 1996.

Furthermore, the report supported the government's decision to transform the Telecommunications Corporation into a public share-holding company owned by the government as a prelude to convert this company into an institution in which the private sector can hold equity.

Before the Senate endorsed the budget law, the Prime Minster, Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, made a brief statement saying the government will grant its employees a monthly JD 10 cost of living allowance as of January. He added that the funds for the increase will be deducted from the budget's public expenditure's allocations.

The Senate during Saturday's session before endorsing the draft budget (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

The prime minister, who was replying to remarks by Senators during the session, said should there be insufficient funds for the allowance, the government would submit a request to the Lower House of Parliament to approve an appendix to the 1996 fiscal budget.

The prime minister said that the government would take the recommendations and remarks of the Senators into account.

In comments on remarks made by the Senators during the session, Finance Minister Basel Jardaneh emphasised that the government was going ahead with plans to eliminate the deficit in the annual budgets and will continue to suppress current expenditure and create opportune climate for investment.

The minister said the government was going ahead with plans to improve the investment climate, link the Jordanian markets with world markets while proceeding with the economic reform programme.

The government also plans to introduce additional legislation to complement the earlier laws concerning the Income Tax Law, with the aim of attaining fair distribution of the tax burden on the public, added Mr. Jardaneh.

He said that the government will continue the process of building up the country's foreign currency reserves so as to ensure the stability of the Jordanian dinar's rate of exchange and will pursue policies aimed at reducing public consumption and expenditure.

HCE accredits R.J. centre

AMMAN (Petra)— The Higher Council for Education (HCE) has agreed to accredit the Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre (RJGC) as a university college that awards graduates BA degrees in survey engineering in cooperation with the University of Jordan's Faculty of Engineering, the centre's director, Salim Khalifeh, announced Saturday.

He said that the college was expected to accept the first group of undergraduate students for survey engineering courses as of the coming academic year (1996-1997), adding that a special task force has been entrusted with making arrangements for the new endeavour.

Saying that the centre has been focusing on supplying government departments with topographic maps and other geographical information, Mr. Khalifeh said that in the past year, the centre produced 50 maps of Jordanian villages that were supplied to the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment

Also in the past year, the centre carried out estimates of water resources in a number of Western Asian countries in implementation of an agreement with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). He said the centre also produced school maps and students' world atlases for use in government schools in implementation of an agreement with the Ministry of Education.

Employing the remote sensing technique, the centre last year also prepared detailed maps about soil, rain fall, land use and hydrology in addition to maps showing potential landslides and areas where dams can be erected, said Mr Khalifeh. Some of these maps have been supplied to the Natural Resources Authority (NRA), he said.

Federation urges Arab free trade zone

AMMAN (Petra)— Jordan last week took part in a meeting of the Council of General Federation of Arab Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Cairo where it urged Arab states to create a free trade zone in the Arab region, Chairman of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce, Haidar Murad, said Saturday.

Mr. Murad, who represented Jordan at the meeting, said that he pointed out to the Arab delegates that trade among Arab countries does not exceed seven per cent of these countries general trade.

Mr. Murad, who was accompanied by a five-member delegation, said he underlined Jordan's keen desire to promote inter-Arab trade, noting that Jordan's trade with other Arab countries accounts for 26 per cent of the Kingdom's overall trade.

Kingdom will protect its interests if Syria denies Jordanian trucks entry — Lawzi

AMMAN (J. T.)— Jordan will prevent Syrian trucks carrying agricultural exports to the Gulf states from passing through its territory if the Syrians do not allow Jordanian trucks carrying such exports to Lebanon from entering through Syrian territories without reason, Salem Lawzi, director general of the Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO), said Wednesday.

Dr Lawzi made the statement in response to a question on how Jordan would react to protect its interests if Syria repeats what it did last week when it prevented 70 trucks from passing through its lands to Lebanon.

Dr Lawzi said the problem was resolved when the Jordanian authorities contacted Jordan's ambassadors in Lebanon and Syria to intervene to settle this problem.

The trucks are now given permission to cross into Syrian territory on their way to Lebanon.

He said the Syrians have no right to stop the trucks in accordance with a transit agreement signed with Jordan.

Meanwhile, he said Lebanon will comply with the agricultural agreement it signed with Jordan last year and will ensure that Jordanian exports of tomatoes to Lebanon will enter the country without delay.

Dr. Lawzi told the Jordan Times that Jordan last week exported 2500 tonnes of tomatoes to Lebanon, thus flooding the Lebanese market with this commodity. That, he said, prompted the Lebanese Agriculture Minister Shawqi Fakhouri to call for organising the flow of tomato shipments to his country.

He said that until Jan. 20, the Lebanese will require a permit for the entry of the Jordanian products in advance.

According to Dr. Lawzi, the Jordanian-Lebanese agreement provides for Jordan to export any amount of tomatoes freely between Jan. 1 and April 30 each year, adding that the agreement will be fully implemented.

Sale of new novel authorised despite initial PPD ban

By Alia Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— The Press and Publications Department (PPD) has authorised the distribution of a new novel by Jordanian writer Ibrahim Nasrallah despite what the director of the department, Mohammed Amin, described as an "initial recommendation" to ban it.

The novel, "Toyour Al Hather," which was printed in Beirut, is expected to be in the market within a period not exceeding two weeks, Mr Nasrallah said.

Mr. Amin said he authorised the sale of the book after consultations with the minister of information and Jordanian writer Munes Al Razzaz.

"The book contains certain violations (of the law)" he said, without elaborating on the nature of the violations.

"But we did not want to approach the issue with a closed mind. We dealt with it with an open mind," said Mr Amin, who added that he authorised the distribution of the book 15 days ago.

The Press and Publications Department has the legal right to ban books printed outside the country from distribution in the Kingdom. This right is embodied in the Press and Publications Law, which went into effect in 1993. Books printed in the Kingdom have to be approved by the department before going to press.

According to Mr. Nasrallah, Fathi Al Bis, the local agent of the Lebanon-based Dar Al Adab, which distributed the controversial novel in Beirut last December, received a document from the PPD dated Dec. 25, banning the distribution of the novel in Jordan.

The document, made available to the Jordan Times by Mr. Nasrallah, and signed by Hassan Al Shawabkeh, director of the Books and Manuscripts section at the PPD, gives no reason why the novel was banned from distribution.

It was not clear, however, to whom the document was addressed and Mr. Amin said it was a recommendation by Mr. Shawabkeh to the PPD director.

Mr. Nasrallah attributed the reversal of the decision to ban the sale of his novel to criticism the local and international press and "various human rights organisations" levelled at the PPD.

He said he believed that his novel was initially banned because reviewers at the PPD found it "politically sensitive and sexually too explicit."

But Mr. Al Bis said that initial bannings of new books are "usual," adding that "upon asking (the PPD) to review the decision, we were given the go-ahead."

He added that he received a phone call from Mr. Shawabkeh last week telling him that the PPD reviewed its decision and decided to allow the distribution of the book in the Kingdom.

According to the author, the novel depicts the life of Palestinians living in the Wihdat refugee camp between the years 1948-1968. The story is mainly told through the life of the protagonist, a boy, whose life is detailed since the time he is in his mother's womb till the age of 13.

Mr. Nasrallah, who is also a poet, photographer and a painter, has written four novels and eight poems.

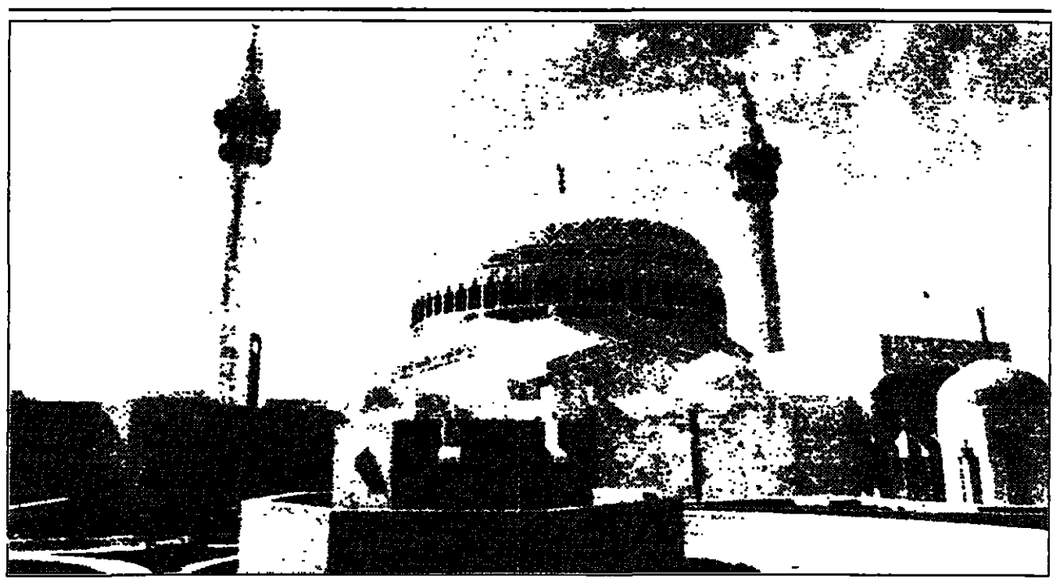
NEWS IN BRIEF

Prince Raad to attend Arzu's inauguration

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Raad Ben Zeid Saturday left for Guatemala to represent His Majesty King Hussein at the inauguration ceremony of President Alvaro Arzu. Mr. Arzu won the presidential elections which took place in the Central American country last Sunday.

Shorter working hours in Ramadan

Amman (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker on Saturday issued a communiqué setting working hours for ministries and government departments during the fasting month of Ramadan, which will start next week. According to the communiqué, civil servants will be working during the holy month from 9.30 a.m. to 2 p.m.



Up to 200 tourists visit King Abdullah Mosque daily during the summer season (File photo)

New museum at King Abdullah Mosque to showcase Kingdom's history

By Alia Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— Tourists visiting the King Abdullah Mosque will soon be treated to a variety of displays featuring photographs and antiquities depicting the Kingdom's history as a new Islamic museum is added to the attractions that the mosque offers.

The museum, which is financed by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Ministry of Awqaf, is expected to open by mid February. It will be divided into two sections, one offering a pictorial display of the life of the late King Abdullah, and the other exhibiting pictures and antiquities of Islamic sites in the country.

The mosque, built by the Ministry of Awqaf between 1982 and1989, is currently serving as the only tourist spot for visitors wishing to catch an inside glimpse of a Muslim place of worship in Amman. The visitor, who is taken on a guided tour through the mosque and its Islamic Cultural Centre, is treated to a brief history of the mosque's construction as well as the purpose of its architecture. The Islamic Cultural Centre contains a wide range of photographs pertaining to the Islamic World, with an emphasis on Muslim sites in Jordan.

Omar Al Jamal, manager of the King Abdullah Mosque, told the Jordan Times that allowing tourists into the mosque is not contradictory to the principles of Islam, and should not be viewed as being controversial.

"The management of the mosque has consulted many Islamic jurists and was informed that there is nothing controversial in allowing tourists to visit," he said. He added that tourists, who can also visit a mosque and a museum in Kerak, are not allowed into the mosque during prayer times. Women are provided with the necessary clothing to ensure that they are dressed in accordance with the Islamic dress code, said Mr. Al Jamal.

According to a tour guide, approximately 50 tourists visit the mosque daily in the winter season. The number goes up to 200 during the summer, when the tourism season is at its peak.

Visiting hours to the mosque are from 8.00 a.m. till 11.00 a.m., and from 3.00 p.m. till 4.30 p.m. The fee for the guided tour is JD 1.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

* Water colours by Salam Kanaan at Riwaq Al Balqa Gallery, Fuhais (until Jan. 20)
* Paintings by Iraqi artist Hareth Muthanna entitled "Women and Horses" at the Royal Cultural Centre (until Jan. 18)
* Water colours by several German artists at Goethe-Institut (until Jan. 21).
* Plastic art by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Utheina (until Feb.. 6).
* Works by artist Raphaile Chabrol at the French Cultural Centre (until Jan. 31).

Colombia drug lord vanishes from jail; $2m reward posted

BOGOTA (R) — Despite offers of a $2 million reward, authorities said there were no clues Friday to the whereabouts of Jose Santacruz Londono, the billionaire drug baron who escaped from a maximum-security prison in Bogota.

Police said they were continuing searches of vehicles at checkpoints set up along roads from the capital and security was tight at bus stations and airports across the country. But they said Mr. Santacruz, the number three leader of the Cali drug cartel, vanished without a trace after his spectacular escape in broad daylight Thursday from La Picota Prison.

National prison director Col. Norberto Pelaez Restrepo, who was dismissed hours after the escape, said Mr. Santacruz fled during the afternoon in a four-wheel drive vehicle identical to one that a group of Colombia's "faceless judges" used when they visited him for questioning Thursday morning.

But Prosecutor-General Alfonso Valdivieso, an anti-drug crusader who has attributed the escape to corruption within the prison system, said Friday the escape vehicle was a different colour and make than the one prosecutors had used.

It was still not clear why authorities took at least three hours to report Mr. Santacruz missing but Attorney General Orlando Vasquez Velasquez, himself the target of a drug-corruption probe by the Supreme Court, said the escape "shows yet again how far the high level of corruption has gone" in Colombia.

Wanted posters offering a $2 million reward for information leading to Mr. Santacruz's arrest flashed over national television hours after his jailbreak.

The portly 52-year-old kingpin, a founding member of the Cali cartel linked to a string of murders and widely reported to be one of the richest men in the world, was captured for the first time on July 4 last year when the bodyguards of national police chief Gen. Rosso Jose Serrano spotted him dining at a restaurant in the capital.

The escape was a major setback for Colombian President Ernesto Samper, who won high marks for the arrests of six of the seven top members of the Cali cartel last summer and had vowed repeatedly they would be punished for their crimes.

Diplomats said it was also likely to fuel growing demands in Washington for a lifting of Colombia's constitutional ban on the extradition of traffickers like Mr. Santacruz who are wanted in the United States.

But Mr. Samper ruled out any move to lift Colombia's constitutional ban on the extradition of its powerful drug traffickers to the United States.

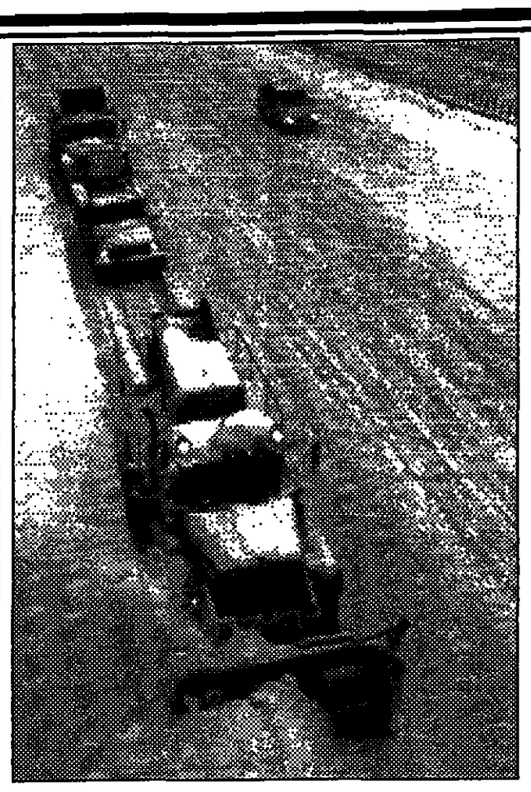
"Extradition is not on the government's agenda," Mr. Samper told a news conference Friday. He called Mr. Santacruz's escape "shameful" and vowed that the 52-year-old trafficker would be tracked down and jailed again.

In Washington, U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency chief Thomas Constantine said Friday he had warned Colombia in November about security problems at the La Picota Prison.

"The escape...realises the fears I had expressed to Colombian Defence Minister Juan Carlos Esguerra during our meeting on Nov. 16, 1995," Mr. Constantine said in a statement.

The U.S. embassy said in a statement Friday it had also raised the possibility the United States would decertify Colombia as a partner in the anti-drug fight when its certification comes up for renewal in March, stripping it of key aid and trade preferences.

Under an annual procedure, President Bill Clinton must tell the U.S. Congress by March 1 whether Colombia is doing all it can to fight traffickers and stem the flow of cocaine and heroin onto America's streets.



Virginia Department of Transportation snowploughs work to remove a new blanket of snow from Interstate 495 outside Washington D.C. in Fairfax county Virginia (AFP photo)

Snow-weary eastern U.S. wonders 'is it over yet?'

WASHINGTON (R) — Weary east coast residents greeted Saturday as a chance to clean up after a blinding week of snow that left major U.S. cities struggling with waist-high snowdrifts, mounting bills and a chill realisation that winter had just begun.

"Somebody push the stop button," Staci Thompson of West Deptford, New Jersey, wrote in an on-line computer discussion group dedicated to a storm dubbed "the blizzard of 96."

After dumping up to 30 inches (76 cm) of snow across the U.S. northeast Monday, nature struck again Friday when a fresh storm swirled northward with new snow and new headaches for a region already almost paralysed by snowfall.

Airports, only just clearing a backlog of travelers delayed by the last storm, reported new closings and fresh delays. The U.S. federal government shut down again. And commuters from Boston to Washington picked their way gingerly over highways transformed into slippery paths between mammoth banks of mounded snow.

The new storm threw another blanket of several inches of snow over Washington, D.C., closing the federal government again after a shutdown of some three weeks prompted first by political argument over the national budget and then by Monday's blizzard.

New York City was treated to a new round of snow followed by sleet, slicking down icy roads and adding to the weight borne by snowpack-laden roofs. In Long Island, New York, about ten people were injured Friday when a supermarket roof in North Massapequa collapsed.

"There was hysteria inside," witness Carol Hanson told NBC-TV. "People had their hands caught in girders. Snow was feet and feet high inside the building."

In New York City's Harlem area, officials said snow and wind probably caused part of a roof of the St. Philips Episcopal Church to collapse Friday, destroying much of the sanctuary. The church was built in 1911. No one was hurt.

Philadelphia, the city hardest hit by Monday's blizzard with some 30 inches (76 cm) of snow, saw icy rain combined with rising temperatures lead to flooding on city streets.

"We're lifing with every dump truck and front-end loader we can get our hands on, day and night 24 hours a day. This is an unprecedented, round-the-clock operation that the city has done over the past four days," Mayor Ed Rendell told a news conference, saying the city had so far removed 85,000 tonnes of snow — 25 to 30 times more than ever before.

Since the weekend, snow has led to more than 85 deaths from North Carolina to Maine, officials say, including many heart attacks brought about by shoveling.

Underlining the gravity of the situation, President Bill Clinton Friday declared New York and Delaware snow disaster areas, and may eventually give a total of nine states the same status, officials said. Maryland and Washington, D.C., were named Thursday.

Federal officials also promised Coast Guard ice-breaking equipment for New York Harbour and trucks and ploughs for Washington, where many streets remained knee-deep in snow and impassable because of last weekend's storms.

New York City government was looking at costs of about $37 million, a spokeswoman for Mayor Rudolph Giuliani estimated, while Pennsylvania's Emergency Management Agency estimated the cost to state and local governments at $69 million so far.

With no major new snow in the immediate forecast, many east coast residents looked ahead with trepidation to a winter storm season that stretches for months to come.

Burmese prisoners' wives protest rights violations

BANGKOK (AFP) — The wives of 36 Burmese political prisoners have written to military authorities urging an end to human rights violations in Rangoon's Insein Prison, a reliable source said Saturday.

The letter was sent recently to the Burmese Ministry for Home Affairs, a family member of the inmates told AFP.

The 36 prisoners have faced harsher conditions since last November when prison officials found anti-government documents, newspapers and a short-wave radio in a cell at Insein Jail, the source said.

They had been put into military dog cells and were refused permission to meet with relatives or to obtain medical attention, the source said.

The women said in their letter they were deeply concerned about the possibility of torture and ill treatment of their husbands in detention. The men's health had suffered due to the severe treatment, the letter said.

In late December, a Burmese opposition group said there had been a crackdown on political prisoners at Insein in a bid to identify the source of reports to Yozo Yokota, the U.N. special rapporteur for human rights, on prison conditions.

Prison officials reportedly suspected the letter to Mr. Yokota was written by a group of five leading members of the opposition National League for Democracy, identified as Win Tin, Myint Wai, Tin Shwe, Myo Myint Nyein and Saw Naing Naing.

Another source said the Burmese authorities learned of the inmates' activities following inquiries from Mr. Yokota as he prepared his annual report to the United Nations on the human rights situation in Burma.

The full report is to be presented in Geneva next month.

Since April 1992, Burma has released more than 2,000 detainees under a decision to free political prisoners no longer deemed a threat to national security.

Meanwhile human rights watchdog Amnesty International Saturday expressed concern at the Thai government's detention of Burmese dissidents seeking asylum in Thailand.

"Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Thai authorities to refrain from its widespread practice of arresting Burmese political activists who are seeking asylum in Thailand," Amnesty said in a statement.

"Nevertheless, arrests continue on a regular basis," it added.

The London-based organisation cited the arrests in November of 25 Burmese political activists in Thailand, about half of whom were picked up during demonstrations against the Burmese government in Bangkok.

Amnesty said most had been released and added that it believed "police detained the group in an effort to prevent public protests in opposition to the continued rule of Myanmar's military authorities."

The human rights group said it was particularly concerned about the detention of two activists, Tin Maung Htoo and Toe Kyi, who had been held for more than two years after being sentenced to 40 days for illegal immigration.

"Their continued detention is in violation of international standards relating to the treatment of asylum seekers," the statement said.

Hong Kong starts anti-rat drive

HONG KONG (AFP) — A month-long anti-rat campaign will be launched in Hong Kong in an attempt to reduce the number of rodents in the territory ahead of the Chinese lunar new year — the Year of the Rat — a government spokesman said Saturday. Government pest-control teams will start the campaign on Hong Kong Island Monday. The spokesman said that pest control teams on Hong Kong Island would step up checks on rodent black spots such as back lanes, refuse collection points, hawker areas and markets. A similar campaign was completed in the neighbouring southern Chinese city of Shenzhen where municipal authorities offered five yuan (60 U.S. cents) for each rat caught. The current Year of the Pig makes way for the Year of the Rat on Feb. 19.

Janet Jackson to sign $80m contract

LOS ANGELES (R) — Pop singer Janet Jackson is set to sign an $80 million contract that will make her the highest paid musician in history, the Los Angeles Times reported. Jackson, 29, who has outsold her elder brother Michael in recent years to become one of the most popular artists in the industry, will receive a $35 million advance upon signing the five-album deal with her label, Virgin Records, the paper said. A london-based spokeswoman for Virgin's parent company, Thorn EMI Plc, declined comment, but said a statement was expected to be released Tuesday. She would not disclose the likely content of the statement. Virgin signed Jackson to a three-album deal in 1991 estimated at $40 million. The signing sent shockwaves through the industry and paved the way for big deals for such acts as Madonna, Prince, the Rolling Stones, Aerosmith and Michael Jackson. Many of these artists have failed to fulfil the promise of their hugely-hyped contracts, however, and industry observers have questioned the business wisdom behind the deals. Janet Jackson's signing was regarded as a good move for both parties. Her first delivery, 1993's Janet, sold nearly 10 million copies worldwide and also allowed her to consider offers from other labels. As a free-agent, Jackson was courted by virtually every major entertainment company including her former label AM Records, the nascent dreamworks label, Sony Corp., Time Warner Inc. And Walt Disney Co. In the end, the paper said, the singer decided to stay with Virgin.

Shark bite sinks fishing boat

SYDNEY (AFP) — Four people were recovering Saturday after a terrifyingly close encounter with a shark which bit a hole in their boat and sank it, rescue officials said. With the four-metre (14-foot) shark circling nearby and the boat foundering fast, two of them scrambled onto a two-person life-raft while the other two clung to the sides of the raft with their legs dangling in the water. A spokesman for the helicopter rescue service said a married couple and two men went shark fishing in a six-metre (19-foot) fibreglass boat Friday and had dropped about 100 litres (210 pints) of bait overboard at a reef. "The 14-foot mako — or blue Pacific — shark then attacked the boat, and it sank within seconds," the spokesman said. "They managed to put a Mayday (SOS) call out just before the boat went down, but an initial search failed to spot them," he said. Nine hours later, the four were spotted by the crew of a cargo vessel off Wollongong, south of Sydney.

Mrs. Clinton denies Whitewater wrongdoing, lamp-throwing

WASHINGTON (AFP) — First lady Hillary Clinton, in an interview broadcast Friday, denied knowledge of any wrongdoing by a failed thrift in what is known as the Whitewater affair and offered to cooperate with a Senate probe.

In a taped interview with ABC Network Television, Mrs. Clinton conceded that she gets "angry about things" but denied ever hurling a lamp or a Bible at her husband, President Bill Clinton, as persistent rumours have alleged.

"There are many variations" on the story, Mrs. Clinton said in the interview. "It particularly bothered me that the Secret Service was used to substantiate untrue stories."

The Secret Service is one of the agencies responsible for security at the White House.

Hillary Clinton also denied possessing a red-hot temper but said, "I do get angry about things. I'm not going to deny that."

"I try to be a direct person. But I don't tell people what to do. I say, 'here's what I think, and I'm concerned about this.'"

The first lady, a topflight lawyer who has at times been depicted as a liability to her husband, has seen her popularity plummet from 59 per cent to 47 per cent in a week, according to the CBS Network.

A CNN/Time magazine poll released Friday found 52 per cent of Americans questioned believe she lied about her role in the Whitewater affair, while 27 per cent think she told the truth and 21 per cent were unsure.

Whitewater was the name of a failed real estate venture, and investigators are trying to figure out whether federally insured deposits in a thrift that eventually collapsed were used to prop up the deal.

The first lady said she was "absolutely not" aware of any wrongdoing by the thrift, for which she had done some legal work, and she denied that any funds from the bank were channeled to her husband's election campaign.

Mrs. Clinton said she knew nothing about documents that disappeared from the office of a presidential aide and family friend who committed suicide in 1993.

The first lady also said she would cooperate with a Senate committee investigating the affair. "I really want it to be finished with," she said.

Separately, Mrs. Clinton has faced allegations that she played a role in the 1993 firings of White House travel office staff, who were then replaced with Clinton friends and associates.

Mrs. Clinton said that while she "did not make the decisions" or "direct anyone to make the decisions" in the so-called travelgate affair, she did express concerns "about any kind of financial mismanagement."

The ABC interview failed to address claims that Hillary Clinton's new book was penned by a ghost-writer.

Titled It Takes A Village, And Other Lessons Children Teach Us, the book focuses on social issues in the United States, including health and education.

Mrs. Clinton assailed her critics in an interview published in Saturday's Los Angeles Times, accusing Republicans of conducting an "investigation in search of a scandal."

"This is an investigation in search of a scandal," the Times quoted Mrs. Clinton as saying in a 45-minute interview conducted at the White House Friday. "This is not about finding out the truth. And I regret it very much."

Mrs. Clinton has been under increasing attack from Republicans in Congress and from editorial columnists about what they say are inconsistencies in her explanations of her role in the failed Whitewater venture and her part in the firing of travel office aides at the White House.

New York Sen. Alphonse D'Amato, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee which is conducting hearings into the Whitewater affair, has compared Whitewater to the Watergate coverup that resulted in President Richard Nixon's resignation.

The Los Angeles Times said Mrs. Clinton acknowledged some of her earlier recollections of Whitewater details and related issues might have been faulty, and said she understands why Americans might question her integrity after seeing her under "nonstop attack."

"For four years on a regular basis I've been accused or criticised or attacked for all different kinds of things," she told the paper. "So that with every step forward that people might take in getting to know me, inevitably there comes some kind of counterattack, starting with the Republican convention in 1992."

But the paper said she dismissed the idea of a press conference or an appearance before the Senate committee because she said it would not be a fair forum.

"The questions keep changing...," she was quoted as saying.

"The people asking them don't want to know the facts, especially if they don't support their accusations."

The newspaper said the interview with Mrs. Clinton had been arranged as part of her forthcoming promotion tour for her new book

But the first lady spent much of the interview defending herself against her Whitewater accusers, the paper said.

Indonesian troops search jungle for hostages

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesian forces led by two generals searched in vain for a sixth day Saturday for 13 kidnap victims, seven of them Europeans, seized by separatist guerrillas in remote Irian Jaya.

"We do not have any developments," Brigadier-General Suwarno Adiwijoyo, the armed forces spokesman, told Reuters after dusk.

Sources close to the operation said they did not expect quick progress in the search through tropical jungle-clad mountains inhabited by tribespeople.

The sources said they believed Indonesian authorities had not yet made contact with the kidnappers.

"The essential thing is to negotiate them out slowly with no resort to military methods," Graham Burton, Britain's ambassador to Indonesia, told Reuters in Jakarta.

Brig. Suwarno said the kidnappers were separatists guerrillas from the Free Papua Movement (OPM).

He said soldiers from the Special Forces Friday freed 11 villagers from the original group of 24 kidnapped last Monday.

The villagers were freed in Jiji village, about 40 kilometres to the east of Mapunduma village, in the Baliem Valley, where the kidnapping took place.

Earlier, Brig. Suwarno told the official Antara News Agency the chief of the strategic reserve, Major-General Tarub, and Special Forces commander Brigadier-General Prabowo Subianto were in Wamena, near the kidnap site, to oversee the search.

"They are there to accompany the commander of the Trikora military region (covering Irian) who is monitoring the progress of the operation," he was quoted as saying.

Brig. Prabowo is President Suharto's son-in-law.

The OPM, which is seeking independence for Irian Jaya, captured the group of scientific researchers and villagers Monday. The freed villagers were all from Mapunduma, 300 kilometres west of the Papua New Guinea border.

Brig. Suwarno said it was clear the kidnap victims, including four Britons, two Dutch and one German, had been split into groups.

The sources close to the search operation said the slow progress was encouraging, especially for the wellbeing of the victims.

U.N.:Burundi refugees flee war

BUJUMBURA (R) — At least 5,000 refugees have fled a civil war in Burundi in the last month for chaotic Zaire which already hosts nearly one million refugees from Rwanda, a report from the refugee agency UNHCR said.

The report obtained by Reuters spoke of civilians from the small central African republic bribing soldiers to avoid being shot and quoted tales from massacre survivors.

"It seems that in the mountainous areas of Nzina, there is a large number of displaced Burundians who have reached this location to escape merciless reprisals on Burundian civilian population carried out by the Burundian army and by Tutsi extremists from the San Echecs militia," said the report written by UNHCR Uvira sub-office head Francesco Ardisson.

"Only those displaced who can afford 700 Burundian francs ($2.59) per person leave Nzina (northwestern Burundi) and are ferried in the night across the Rusizi to get to the country of asylum," added the report, dated Jan. 4.

The influx from Burundi into Zaire is on top of the nearly one million refugees from Rwanda who belong to the Hutu tribe.

A UNHCR officer confirmed that the number of refugees fleeing into eastern Zaire had risen "dramatically" since early December because of increased insecurity.

"We have seen a marked increase in the number of people crossing the border, we believe, because no international agencies are assisting the displaced persons' camps and because of increased fighting," said Paul Stromberg, UNHCR spokesman in the Rwandan capital of Kigali.

The Rwandan refugees have lived in eastern Zaire for more than a year fearing reprisals from a Tutsi-dominated army for the slaughter of ethnic Tutsis in 1994. They have been reluctant to return home.

Shuttle captures Japanese satellite

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla (R) — Space shuttle Endeavour successfully completed the main goal of its ambitious nine-day mission Saturday — hauling in a Japanese satellite and tucking it away in the orbiter's payload bay.

Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata, a member of the shuttle's six-person crew, snared the satellite using the shuttle's 15 metre robot arm at 5:57 a.m. est (1057gmt). He then poised the satellite over the orbiter's payload bay and slowly lowered it onto a platform there.

The manoeuvre was completed when the satellite was latched down at 6:39 a.m. est (1139 GMT).

"Congratulations on a great grab," a Houston ground controller told Endeavour's crew. The satellite holds experiments that will be evaluated when the satellite is returned to Japan.

Grappling the satellite was not without problems. The satellite's two solar arrays were retracted by commands sent by Japanese controllers, but the panels failed to lock in place against the body of the satellite as expected.

The Japanese satellite had to be manoeuvred so that the arrays floated away in a direction not likely to hit the space shuttle, NASA said.

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France rebuffs Corsican separatists after truce

AJACCIO, Corsica (R) — France rebuffed demands by Corsican separatists after a major guerrilla group called a three-month truce in a bombing campaign on the French Mediterranean island and staged a show of military force.

"The state will remain in Corsica just as Corsica will remain in France," Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debre said during a visit to the island, rocked by 44 bomb attacks this year alone as part of a drive for greater autonomy from France.

"There is no hope for the island's development without the parallel re-establishment of respect for the law," he said in a speech in Ajaccio, adding he was willing to reinforce police to crack down.

Earlier, at a clandestine news conference in the central hills, a masked spokesman for the historic wing of the outlawed Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) announced a three-month truce and hoped the gesture would bring talks.

In one of the group's biggest ever shows of force, about 600 hooded guerrillas, many carrying rocket-propelled grenades, assault rifles and machine pistols, lunged nationalist leaders officials during the night-time briefing.

Mr. Debre ruled out negotiating with guerrillas but said there was a narrow opening for talks. During his two-day visit Mr. Debre is meeting politicians, including nationalists, about the island's problems. He arrived under tight security Friday.

"The moment has come to move on to a positive dialogue," he said. France has denied reports that secret negotiations with guerrillas are already under way.

Apart from 44 bombings in the first 11 days of this year, there were 602 in 1995. Crime rates on the island of 250,000 people, whose main industry is tourism, are far higher than on mainland France.

Mr. Debre's visit is allowing local political leaders to voice their concern about the worsening political, economic and employment situation in Corsica. Mr. Debre briefly walked in the streets, shaking a few hands while flanked by security guards.

"The truth is that for the last few years, Corsica has no longer been fully part of the republic...because for a long time on this island security is no longer guaranteed and the law is no longer enforced as it should be," Jose Rossi, president of the Southern Corsica Regional Council, told France-Info Radio.

The bombs have mainly been aimed at central government and tax offices as part of a drive to win new tax exemptions for the already heavily-subsidised and tax-sheltered island.

Recent violence has been blamed partly on rivalry between various nationalist factions, including the FLNC historic wing, the less extreme FLNC traditional wing and a group known as Resistenza. Each has its own political front organisation.

The FLNC historical wing spokesman said the group's demands for a permanent peace included formal recognition of the Corsican people, use of the Corsican language in schools, more autonomy for the Corsican Assembly and the dissolution of two regional councils that are part of France's national government.

Night-time bombings, which rarely cause casualties, are a traditional tactic of Corsican nationalists, who have been waging a low-level guerrilla campaign for the past 25 years.

Sri Lanka rebels say Colombo prolonging war

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan Tamil rebels said Saturday the government was not interested in finding a political solution to the 12-year ethnic war which has killed more than 60,000 people.

"The government is hurrying to buy more supersonic fighters, helicopter gunships, naval gunboats and armoured tanks, all of which are quite clearly intended to be used against the Tamil people to crush their demand for justice and peace," a rebel statement said.

"This clearly shows that the Sri Lankan government does not believe in finding a political solution to the continuing national conflict," the statement by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said.

The LTTE, which broke a three-month ceasefire last April, continues its war for an independent homeland called "Eelam" for minority Tamils in the island's north and east.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government has presented a peace package granting substantial devolution to Tamils. She has repeatedly stressed the war is not against the Tamil people.

The rebels have shunned invitations to consider the package, which is expected to be presented in parliament this month.

The government has promised to end the war and begin negotiations with moderate Tamil groups before the end of this year.

The government raised defence spending to 38 billion rupees ($717 million) in 1996 from 24 billion rupees ($453 million) last year.

The air force, which has lost half its fleet of big transport planes in guerrilla attacks or accidents since April, this month acquired three Kfir fighters from Israel. Three more are on the way as are more MI-17 transport and MI-24 hind attack helicopters from the former Soviet Union.

China, Sri Lanka's main arms supplier, had delivered an anti-submarine warfare vessel to meet the threat from rebel underwater suicide bombers, along with a landing craft and two gunboats.

Chechen field Commander Salman Raduyev calls with a satellite phone while his bodyguards stand close to him in the Dagestan village of Pervomaiskaya. Commander Ruduyev and his fighters set up a base in this village after his convoy leaving the hospital for Chechenya was blocked by Russian forces (AFP photo)

Russia wants Chechen surrender without conditions

OUTSIDE PERVOMAYSKAYA, Russia (R) — Chechen rebels holding at least 100 hostages appeared ready to release the women Saturday, but Russia reaffirmed its position that the rebels must surrender without conditions.

The rebels want safe passage to Chechenya, but an FSB security service spokesman seemed to put paid to their dream of a hero's return to their homeland.

Alexander Zdanovich, first deputy head of the FSB's press office told ITAR-TASS news agency Russia wanted the rebels to "surrender without conditions in the interests of securing the lives of hostages and peaceful citizens".

Russia has taken a tough line throughout the drama and has said the Chechens cannot leave Dagestan with their captives.

The rebels have been holding round after round of talks with officials from the Dagestan region where the fighters and their captives are encircled by Russian troops and armour.

But there was no sign of an end to the deadlock.

Dagestani Nationalities Minister Magomed Gusayev had said earlier that the rebels were ready to free the women, but that they had refused to leave without their husbands.

Mr. Zdanovich said the Chechens were still holding 10 women hostage, but the last children had been released Saturday.

Eight captives were freed Saturday, but one returned later to plead with the other women to leave.

Russian forces surround freezing Pervomayskaya, just short of the Chechen border, where the rebels' convoy was forced to stop after a bloody cross-border raid on the Dagestani town of Kizlyar.

Hundreds of people from nearby villages came in cars and on foot to lobby for an end to the ordeal, which began Tuesday when rebels herded about 2,000 people into a Kizlyar hospital.

"We want to form a living corridor from here all the way to Chechenya, to accompany then on foot so that everything can be done without bloodshed," one man said.

But the crowd was turned back across the snowy steppeland, which was dotted with people praying.

Mr. Gusayev told the crowd it was interfering with the talks. "Talks are going ahead, but there are difficulties," he said.

The hostage crisis has placed President Boris Yeltsin in a tough spot five months ahead of a presidential election.

The gunmen have vowed to fight "to the last bullet" and say Moscow politicians, foreign journalists and aid workers should travel with them to guarantee their safety.

Dagestani leader Magomedali Magomedov said Mr. Yeltsin had told him that Russia was seeking "the most acceptable option". The president wanted to save lives, but was also determined not to let the Chechen "bandits" go unpunished, Mr. Magomedov said.

But negotiators gave no details of any deal with the rebels, who see Russian troops sent to the region in December 1994 as invaders and are determined to drive them out.

Journalists were being kept well back from the scene of the hostage crisis, which has sparked fears of more rebel forays into neighbouring regions in the mountainous north Caucasus.

Security service spokesman Alexander Mikhailov said there were signs that rebels were gathering forces. "There are such signals but in principle I think we have enough forces, especially in Chechenya, to block them. We're not having any big problem here (in Dagestan)," he said.

This is the second time in seven months that the separatists have taken their struggle outside their region. Scores of people were killed in a similar raid on a Russian town in June.

Poll: New Japan government in step

TOKYO (R) — Japan's new government Saturday survived its first day blues, muting demands for snap elections and getting in step with voters by sending a clear message that recovering economic pride was the country's top priority.

In the first newspaper poll released since former Trade Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto became prime minister Thursday, the mass circulation Yomiuri Shimbun said nearly three-quarters of the people it surveyed since his election wanted the new government to concentrate on reviving Japan's sluggish economy.

The finding was music to the ears of Mr. Hashimoto's fledgling administration which has sent out the same orchestrated message since taking office.

Minister after minister in their debut news conferences Friday spoke of how the nation's energies must first be directed to putting Japan's financial house in order before moving on to drastic policy shifts.

In beating back a chorus of demands Friday for snap elections, Mr. Hashimoto used the same argument, saying early polls would get in the way of economic recovery.

"We are not in a situation now where I should talk about dissolution of parliament," Mr. Hashimoto said at his own first news conference.

General elections need not be called until mid-1997, but even Mr. Hashimoto supporters appear to accept that while they can fight off election calls for a while, national polls will be necessary this year, possibly any time after the budget is passed at the end of March.

Newspapers and the opposition had demanded quick polls to get the judgment of the public, rather than having Mr. Hashimoto's election to power simply rammed through parliament by his coalition majority.

Japan has been governed for 19 months by a coalition of outgoing Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama's Socialists, Mr. Hashimoto's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which is the biggest member of the bloc, and the small Sakigake Party of outgoing Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura.

There was also personal good news for Mr. Hashimoto in the poll of 1,500 people.

Two-thirds of them have "great" or "some" expectations that the debonair politician who fought the United States to a standstill in a car trade war last year, can lead Japan to a brighter future.

But roughly the same percentage oppose the government's plans to solve the greatest economic crisis at the moment — using 680 billion Yen ($7 billion) of public money to wind up failed home mortgage firms that overlent during the 1980's "bubble" years.

It is the issue the opposition Shinshinto (New Frontier Party) plans to zero in on when parliament resumes on Jan. 22.

In their public statements, the new ministers said there was no option but to use taxpayers' money to solve the crisis.

"The introduction of public money on the matter was an inevitable decision as a way to rebuild Japan's financial system," Agriculture Minister Ichizo Ohara said.

British queen's marriage spotlighted in book

LONDON (R) — Queen Elizabeth's sometimes stormy marriage to Prince Philip was highlighted in a new biography Saturday which also questioned Prince Philip's fidelity.

Biographer Sarah Bradford, who was allowed access to private royal correspondence as well as courtiers and close friends, said Prince Philip was devoted to the queen.

But at the same time he shouts at her and Bradford lends credence to previous suggestions that he has a roving eye for other women.

"He shouts at the queen sometimes, as he shouts at other people and she doesn't seem to mind. It's as if she thinks that's how husbands behave," Bradford quotes an unnamed friend as saying

"On one occasion, after Elizabeth had ordered something to be done in the park at Windsor, Prince Philip exploded at luncheon: "What bloody fool arranged for that?'

"Elizabeth said: "I did.' "Well,' her husband shouted, "it was a bloody stupid thing to do'."

Extracts from Bradford's book, to be published in February to mark the queen's 70th birthday this year, were published in the Times newspaper.

Many of the rumours about Prince Philip's alleged extra-marital relationships in the early days of the 48-year-marriage have been raised in the past in the tabloid press.

But their appearance in a respected newspaper like the Times broke a taboo over the queen's private life, which unlike that of her children, has largely been kept out of the public domain.

"Theirs is a very royal marriage. Elizabeth's generation was not brought up to expect fidelity but loyalty...Elizabeth understands his desire for independence and to be his own man and makes allowances for it," Bradford writes.

She relates an occasion at a party when the queen was sitting talking at a table beside the dance floor.

"But her eyes were elsewhere and, as the dancers parted, she could see her husband dancing very close to the hostess's daughter. She sees but does not want to know, taking it all in her stride.

"Nor does she want to be told. When a lady-in-waiting attempted to enlighten her, Elizabeth sacked her, despite their long years of friendship," Bradford writes.

But the marriage is nevertheless deep and close. "They understand each other on a deep level and the marriage works," she adds.

Bradford took six years to research the book, called Elizabeth, A Biography Of Her Majesty The Queen which follows a previous biography of the queen's father King George VI.

She ended her work with a strong liking for the queen, although following royal tradition she was not allowed to interview Queen Elizabeth.

"I find her totally admirable...she innately knows how to do the job. She does not court popularity. She does her duty.

"She is fascinated by people outside and wants to know what's going on but doesn't think of herself as 'winning hearts'. That's not her thing," Bradford said in an interview.

Head of Yeltsin's administration resigns

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Sergei Filatov, the head of Russian President Boris Yeltsin's administration, announced his resignation Saturday, Interfax News Agency reported.

Mr. Filatov said Mr. Yeltsin had offered him a different post and he had accepted it.

"A few days ago I spoke to President Boris Yeltsin. He offered me a different post and I agreed to the offer," Mr. Filatov told Interfax.

He did not say when he would take up the new post, and Interfax did not give further details about it.

Meanwhile new Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said Friday he would defend Russia's national interests staunchly with a policy befitting a "great power", but he also vowed to seek good ties with the West.

Mr. Primakov sent varied signals at his first news conference since he was named to replace Andrei Kozyrev Tuesday, making clear Moscow's policy would be more assertive but also trying to calm Western fears over his appointment.

"We are a great power and our policy must reflect our status," said Mr. Primakov, a 66-year-old former spy chief and former high-ranking Communist Party official.

"I consider it my main task to step up the Foreign Ministry's work in defending Russia's national interests, but I don't think that will contradict the development of ties with the United States."

In a quip over his last job as head of the Foreign Intelligence Service, one of several groups created out of the old KGB secret police, he said: "I would very much not like to be a persona non grata for the people of the United States."

Some U.S. officials have expressed unease in private over the appointment of a man regarded as less pro-reform than Mr. Kozyrev, who built bridges with the West but was accused in Moscow of letting Russia be ignored on the world stage.

President Boris Yeltsin, as head of state, remains in charge of foreign policy and says there will be no fundamental changes.

But most analysts say Mr. Primakov's appointment is the latest signal that Moscow will be firmer in defending its interests and is partly a gesture to the success of the resurgent Communist Party in last month's parliamentary election.

Mr. Primakov said his priorities would include strengthening ties with the other former Soviet republics and countries including China, Japan and Middle Eastern states.

He vowed there would be no return to the cold war, but made clear he regarded the expansion of NATO to include countries of Eastern and Central Europe as a danger.

"I have a negative attitude on the possible expansion of NATO. I think it is counter-productive for the stabilisation of the situation in Europe and would undoubtedly create a new geo-political situation for Russia," he said.

He also hoped the United States would keep intact the 1972 anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty, saying violating it could deter the Russian parliament from ratifying the START-2 strategic arms reduction treaty.

He was referring to Congress' approval of a $275 billion defence bill including a U.S. anti-missile defence which Moscow fears could violate the ABM treaty.

Turning to Asia, he urged Tokyo to put aside for other generations a dispute over control of the southern Kurile Islands off Russia's Far Eastern coast and instead develop ties with Moscow to create conditions for solving the dispute later.

Soviet troops seized the islands at the end of World War II and Japan, which calls them the Northern Territories, wants them back.

In a rare glimpse of the private thoughts of a spymaster, Mr. Primakov said it had been hard to give up a job he loved for a post he might lose if Mr. Yeltsin does not win re-election in June.

"I was very happy in my previous job, where I worked for four years and four months. Obviously they were far from the worst years of my life, and were the best," he said. "I understand this is a great responsibility on my shoulders."

U.S. sets illegal immigration steps, Mexico 'concerned'

WASHINGTON (R) — The Clinton administration announced new efforts Friday to combat an expected surge in illegal immigration along the southwest border with Mexico, including more support from the U.S. military and local police.

"We are working to close the side door and the back door to illegal immigration across the southwest border," Attorney General Janet Reno said in a statement to a news conference. "The plan is aggressive, smart and it will be effective."

The plan, which starts Tuesday, calls for an additional 300 immigration employees to be sent to California and Arizona, greater support by the U.S. military and National Guard units for various tasks and use for the first time of local police.

However, at a news conference at the Otay Mesa border crossing east of San Diego, Ms. Reno's border policing czar stressed it did not mean "a militarisation" of the border.

"The army has played a role at this border for many, many years," Alan Bersin, the U.S. attorney for the San Diego area, told reporters.

He said the army would supply 200-350 troops in a support role watching movements around the frontier but that border patrol agents would carry out the actual enforcement.

"What we have, in effect, is one team wearing different uniforms," said Mr. Bersin, who added that Mexican officials had been briefed on the measures.

In Mexico, the Foreign Ministry said Friday the measures were detrimental to good relations between the two countries and expressed "deep concern" at the possible use of military personnel.

"Mexico expresses its deep concern at the possible inclusion of military personnel in migration operations," it said in a statement.

"Our country reiterates that these responses do not resolve the complex phenomenon of migration and nevertheless contribute to rarification of the relations between the border communities."

The effort is part of the administration's bid to regain control of the border. Illegal immigration, already high because of Mexico's economic problems, is expected to increase until mid-April.

According to a spokesman in San Diego, the border patrol made 524,000 arrests in the San Diego sector alone last year. Arrests in December were 31,031, more than double the 14,011 made in the same month in 1994, he said.

Illegal immigration has become a major political issue, especially in California, a state considered crucial for President Bill Clinton's 1996 re-election bid.

Immigration officials estimated the programme would cost more than $7.5 million for the next three months, plus $5 million to reimburse 135 local police agencies in California and Arizona. Among the tasks for local police would be to transport illegal aliens and ride with border patrol agents.

They said the plan called for 200 extra border patrol agents, 60 special immigration officials who will go to regional airports to crack down on illegal alien smuggling rings and 40 inspectors who are being sent to border offices.

The officials also said immigration officials will open 70 highway checkpoints in remote parts of Arizona and California in an effort to close off alien smuggling routes.

Italy battens down for long political crisis

ROME (R) — Italy faced weeks of hard political bargaining Saturday following Prime Minister Lamberto Dini's resignation and some newspapers said it would not be clear until March whether the country would get a new government.

The alternative was a general election, but many political commentators forecast that, if it went ahead, it would have to be delayed at least until mid-April.

"A slow-motion crisis," the newspaper La Stampa said.

"The crisis...won't be short and it won't be easy," commented Il Sole 24 Ore, Italy's main business daily.

A political crisis in the Italian sense is the period between the end of one government and the start of the next. The record is 126 days, more than the life of some of the 54 governments since 1945.

Mr. Dini resigned Thursday after a debate in parliament showed that his unelected government of technocrats, appointed one year ago, could no longer count on a majority.

Parties in the deadlocked legislature, elected in 1994, must now decide whether they can agree on a programme of key reforms to deliver Italy stability and form a government to see them through or whether to plump for a return to the polls.

The sheer number of parties involved, the complexity of the issues and what some political analysts said was a desire by President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro to take his time all worked against a rapid resolution, commentators said.

Mr. Scalfaro is the key institutional figure in the process now under way and will begin six days of talks from Monday with the proliferation of parties in parliament on their views on the way forward for Italy.

"Queue forms at presidential palace. 25 to consult," the leftist newspaper l'Unita said in a reference to the number of parliamentary parties and groups which will file through Mr. Scalfaro's study.

Many analysts forecast that the consultations would be followed after a period of reflection by Mr. Scalfaro — perhaps 10 days — leading to a decision from the head of state to appoint a mediator to pursue even more talks.

The ex-communist Democratic Party of the Left, biggest force in the centre-left bloc in parliament, proposed such a formula Friday.

News reports said the front-runner for such an "exploratory mandate" was Carlo Scognamiglio, speaker of the Senate (upper house) and a professor of economics who in the past was close to media magnate Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right Freedom Alliance.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation, Established 1975

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Fighting for a noble cause

IN ITS latest effort to push for freedom of expression, the United Nations invited 110 media specialists from all over the Arab World for a week-long conference in Sana'a that issued the Sana'a Declaration on Friday.

The declaration, recognising all the impediments to freedom of expression in the Arab World, came out with a manifesto that, if adopted, would put the Arab media on par with these of the established democracies.

While we appreciate and commend the U.N. for its advocacy and campaigning for free expression and free media, we would want to note that such a noble cause can only be accomplished in free societies. That, unfortunately, is not the case in most Arab countries. While we acknowledge that the U.N. and other world organisations continually urge governments to liberalise their political systems and criticise government abuses of human rights, we can only note that the campaign for free media has put journalists at the forefront of the struggle, making them victims to oppressive and corrupt regimes, the drug lords and fundamental ideologists.

In 1993, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that 56 journalists were killed across the world "in the line of their duty." In March 1993, the CPJ, documented a record 126 journalists jailed in 28 countries. The numbers have been on the increase since. Hardly a day passes without the death or detention of a journalist, mostly in developing countries with authoritarian regimes.

Most of those countries, ironically, receive different forms of aid from different U.N. organisations, including UNESCO, the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. The U.N., its different organisations and all affiliated bodies, like the World Bank, would do better by placing punitive measures on countries that have no respect for human rights or human lives. It is not enough to mobilise the journalists against their regimes and at the same time prop up those regimes with aid from the U.N. and the so-called free world. While we journalists continue to uphold the principle of freedom and continue to defend that principle, we would like to get the right assistance from those who can help provide it.

The drafters of Sana'a Declaration have pointed to this issue when they said that "international assistance in Arab countries should aim to develop... media, independent of government in order to encourage pluralism as well as editorial independence."

We continue to believe in the U.N. mandate and trust its intentions. But we want it to strongly defend the sacred rights to free expression. The U.N. itself cannot possibly fulfil its mandate and achieve worldwide peace until every individual is guaranteed the freedom to express his/her opinion freely and without fear.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in **Al Ra'i** daily welcomed a proposal from Paris to deploy French troops along the borders separating Israel from Syria and Lebanon to keep the peace. Mahmoud Rimawi said this could be the best and most positive European contribution to ending the Middle East conflict and helping in the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in this region. Israel might oppose the idea because it is keen on giving the U.S. the role to handle the issue by itself without European interference that might not be in favour of the Jewish state, but a French presence could nevertheless guarantee the security of Israel, a long-sought objective of the Jewish state, said the writer. He said that the French proposal reflects Paris' increased interest in helping to end regional conflicts, and comes in the wake of French moves to settle the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute over the Red Sea islands and its efforts to make Iraq accept U.N. Security Council Resolution 986 to help bring a gradual end to the sanctions on Iraq.

A WRITER in **Al Dustour** urged Israel to release Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the leader of the Hamas group, and the thousands of the remaining Palestinian detainees in implementation of the Oslo agreements. Mohammad Kawash said Israel failed to abide by the provisions of the first Oslo agreement when it pledged to set free all prisoners and delayed the start of the process of their gradual release under the second Oslo agreement. The writer urged the Palestinian leadership to press for the immediate release of the prisoners, Israeli compensation for those who sustained injuries due to torture and arbitrary and in human treatment and most of all the release of Sheikh Yassin.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Al Fanek

Is the economy doing well?

WHEN IT comes to the economy, it is difficult to agree on many things, least of all whether the economy is doing well, and to what extent. The conventional wisdom at the street level is that the Jordanian economy is currently in bad shape and that the recession is the name of the game.

Many players in the marketplace complain, loudly and bitterly, that their customers declined sharply. Even lawyers and doctors and other professionals say that their clients dropped, and their business is at a very low level, perhaps the lowest in years.

At the same time, the macroeconomic indicators of the aggregate economy are giving very healthy readings. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew at 6.5 per cent in 1995, according to preliminary estimates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) experts who revised up their previous projections. Exports grew at 23.1 per cent during the first ten months of 1995 in comparison with the same period of 1994, an unprecedented growth rate, while imports were growing at 10 per cent per annum, hardly an indication of an economic recession. Cost of living index in October 1995 was only 2.8 per cent higher than the same month of the previous year.

Other indicators such as foreign currency reserves, construction, tourist arrivals, industrial output, energy consumption, Aqaba port activity, gave very healthy readings.

How can one reconcile these excellent macroeconomic indicators with the complaints raised by businessmen and ordinary citizens alike.

In fact good and bad are relative terms used often to describe situations. Whether something is good or bad depends on a reference point to compare with. If we compare the present economic situation with that of the past, we can easily see the improvement and conclude that the economy is good, or at least it is heading in the right direction. If, on the other hand, we compare the Jordanian situation with the patterns prevailing in the industrialised countries, we shall be disappointed. The per capita income in Jordan is less than one tenth of the per capita income in Western European countries such as Germany, Britain or France.

It seems that, in our case, the reference point is neither the past nor the industrialised countries, it is the high expectations which were allowed to rise beyond reason, especially at the time of signing the peace treaty with Israel. Some people were made or left to believe that peace is the magic solution of all economic problems, and that unemployment should drop substantially, poverty would disappear overnight and the standard of living would make a big jump. The man in the street, we were told, will feel the difference.

Most likely, people are disappointed. They labelled the situation as bad in comparison with their unfulfilled expectations. If that is the case, then the remedy should be a revised attitude and a real conviction that better quality of life can be brought about only through hardwork, meaningful investments, and long-term perspective. Prosperity will not come about as a free gift from others.

We are definitely doing fine, but we can do better. The future is promising provided we are self-dependent, competitive and determined.

If the bear comes back

By Gwynne Dyer

COMPARED TO Attila the Hun, say, Yevgeni Primakov, the new Russian foreign minister, is a reasonable and even a moderate man. But the world has just lost the best man to run the Kremlin's foreign policy in this century, and by the end of this year.

I would even be looking back at would Mr. Primakov with longing.

"More than once the president has expressed his displeasure with the work of the foreign ministry," said Russian President Boris Yeltsin in announcing the dismissal of Andrei Kozyrev on Jan. 5, and mistakes have been made by the minister himself in the international arena." But Mr. Yeltsin knows that is not true. Credit where it is due: Mr. Yeltsin picked Mr. Kozyrev as Russia's foreign minister even before the old Soviet Union broke up in late 1991, and he protected the foreign minister from the attacks of ultra-nationalists even while distancing himself personally from Mr. Kozyrev's doveish internationalism.

Dumping him now is an attempt to placate the Communists and nationalists who did so well in December's parliamentary election. Bad-mouthing him in the process is part of Mr. Yeltsin's strategy for currying favour with the nationalist vote in the June Presidential election. But we all owe a lot to Andrei Kozyrev.

For the past four years he has fought a gallant and mostly successful action against the nationalists and disappointed imperialists who wanted a 'stronger' Russian foreign policy.

Mr. Primakov, the new foreign minister, is a much more conventional product of the Soviet system. He has been popping up on the diplomatic circuit for decades, usually claiming to be a journalist but mostly working for the KGB.

The KGB was the most intellectually serious element of the old Communist apparatus, and Mr. Primakov himself is classic KGB: highly professional and very well-informed. But the same background also gives him the firm belief that international politics an a zero-sum game: for Russia to win, others must lose.

All this is compounded by the fact that Mr. Primakov's orders are to make the nationalists happy. That will suit him right down to the ground, since he has close ties with the leaders of former Soviet client states.

It will be especially hard for Mr. Primakov to refrain from meddling in Middle Eastern affairs simply in order to make the Russian presence felt, even if his interventions jeopardise the delicate last phase of negotiations for a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace. But there may be worse to follow.

Mr. Primakov could easily be swept away with his master Boris Yeltsin by a nationalist/Communist victory in the presidential election in June. And then what happens?

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the grossly misnamed Liberal Democratic Party and clown prince of the loony right, who at one time or another has already threatened to "create new Hiroshimas and Nagasakis" in virtually every one of Russia's neighbours except South Korea, has already applied for the job of foreign minister.

Mercifully, neither of the two presidential aspirants with a chance of beating Mr. Yeltsin, General Alexander Lebed or Communist leader Gennadi Zyuganov is crazy enough to give Mr. Zhirinovsky the foreign ministry. But they both need the military/nationalist elite, so the next foreign minister would likely be a general who sees foreign countries as potential military threats, and uses them as an excuse to build up the Russian armed forces again.

The new government would probably use the September vote in favour of building ballistic missile defences by the U.S. Congress (a body just as nationalistic and parochial as the Russian Duma) as a pretext for halting compliance with the SALT treaties.

It might also abrogate the CFE treaty limiting conventional forces in Europe, despite recent NATO concessions that made allowances for Russia's shrunken post-Soviet borders. But the biggest impact of the new policies would not be in the West; it would be around the rest of Russia's long perimeter.

Israel and Syria may have as little as six months to conclude a peace treaty before a new Russian government starts trying to sabotage the process. Why? Because a Middle East without that military confrontation at its heart offers few openings to create Russian client-states and sell them vast quantities of arms.

Tourism economics

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

IN 1993 tourism represented 6 per cent of the world's gross national product, employed 127 million people and established itself as the world's leading industry. The number of tourists increased worldwide from 25 million in 1950 to 443 million in 1990 and the income from tourism increased from $2.5 billion in 1950 to $255 billion in 1990. Furthermore, tourism is by far the top job generating industry in the world.

What is tourism? "The term tourism encompasses travellers away from home and the business and people who serve them by expediting or otherwise making the travel somewhat easier or more entertaining. A traveller is someone who is a specified distance away from home." (Pg. 4, Tourism Economics [1995], by Lunberg et al).

Who are the biggest tourists? The World Tourism Organisation ranked them in 1992 in terms of expenditures by citizens, and the top five spending nations were:

Country	US$ Millions
USA	43,684
Germany	37,166
Japan	26,982
U.K.	19,485
Italy	16,200

Note that the big spenders are also the world's industrialists. The total spending of people from these five countries represented over half of the world's spending on tourism. Obviously being rich means you can afford to appreciate the world more.

Tourism income in Jordan has grown from JD4.9 million in 1970 to JD314.3 million in 1992. By 1994 the tourism income dramatically increased to JD600 million, almost double its 1992 level. The Ministry of Tourism expects that the income generated from tourism in 1995 will be JD800 million which is almost 15 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for that year. In other words, in 1995 tourism revenue increased by 33 per cent from the previous year.

Tourism income is a significant contributor to our economy. As a tourism dollar is spent in Jordan it creates what is known as the multiplier effect; that is, as the dollar gets spent it becomes income to the person who receives it who then spends some of it and saves the rest. The amount he/she spends becomes income to somebody else and this person saves some of it and spends the rest. Thus, one dollar may generate more than one dollar in expended economic activity (GDP).

Tourism multipliers are usually high and vary from one country to another. They are affected by how much of the money is spent at home: A country that doesn't spend much on imports will likely have a higher multiplier than one which takes the money from tourism only to spend it on imports. Imports tend to reduce the multiplier effect by leaking the money out of the economy which is why developing countries have lower multipliers than developed countries. The table below shows the multipliers of different countries.

country	multiplier
Canada	2.5
Turkey	1.96
Egypt	1.23
Cyprus	1.14

Note that the countries which rely less on imports have a higher multiplier, i.e., they benefit more from the tourism income.

Accordingly, Jordan's tourism multiplier should be low. Our imports are three times our exports and represent a major portion of our GDP. In order to reap all the possible benefits from tourism, quality domestic products are a must. The catch is to provide quality inputs. If they can't be made at home then importing inputs to make a quality product (tourism) is not so bad, as long as we have value-added, i.e., as long as we add something to these inputs before we sell them.

Natural sites and archeological have been handed down to us from our ancestors who were great craftsmen and artisans. All we have to do is take care of them, tell the world about them, and enjoy them. The value-added we can provide is infrastructure for tourism services, tourism services, and information. It seems however, that we are behaving somewhat undeservedly. Have you driven to the Dead Sea lately? If you haven't let me assure you that it is still the lowest spot on earth and that the other side is filled with tourist services. We, on our side, have added our own contribution to this beauty: The street leading to it is so full of trash, discarded plastic bags and leftovers from picnickers that it may soon become the filthiest spot on earth. If we choose not to maintain our treasures so that they aren't as clean and beautiful as they were before we came, we chance losing them and also the revenues generated from tourism. The losers will be all of us: people, government, municipalities, and the generations to come. A sincere, concerted preservation effort needs to start soon, let's not wait too long.

Germany has a plan for Europe that goes too far too fast

By Brian Beedham

LONDON — Dear Helmut, we hope you do not mind getting this letter. You may have noticed our little group at the European Union (EU) summit in Madrid last month — Jacques and John and Felipe and that nice professional Italian — going into a huddle from time to time, and giving a nervous look in your direction. The others have asked me to tell you what it was all about.

The fact is, we are all rather worried that Helmut Kohl's Germany has got a bit bullheaded on the subject of Europe.

It is not just John Major's English nervousness about being swallowed up by a federal Europe. Nor is it just Felipe González's and Lamberto Dini's alarm that Spain and Italy (and half a dozen other countries) may not qualify for monetary union by 1999.

The concern goes deeper, to the very heart of the post-1945 European experiment. You will have seen our friend Jacques Delors' lament last week that the special relationship between France and Germany may be cracking. The truth is, Jacques Chirac's France is worried about you, too.

This is partly, but only partly, because of the pain caused by your insistence that monetary union must begin by 1999. In a Europe where unemployment is far worse than in America or Japan, and where flagging economies will not soon improve things, it is no surprise that those Europeans with even more unemployment than the European average — meaning, among others, the French — do not relish having to make their jobless lines even longer in the name of the Maastricht criteria for monetary union.

They know they have got to cut their deficits and their debts, Maastricht or no Maastricht. But, as an honest Gaullist, Pierre Lelloche, said on this page last Thursday, it would help if you were not so adamant about that 1999 deadline.

The concern goes beyond deadline anxiety. The past few weeks' argument about monetary union has made it clear why the special relationship between Germany and France is in danger. It is because your German picture of the future of that relationship is different from Mr. Chirac's picture, and probably from most other Frenchmen's.

The difference emerges from an examination of details of the proposed monetary union. When the Euro is the coin in our pockets, how are countries with worse-than-average unemployment rates (such as France) going to try to close the gap between themselves and the better-than-average ones?

They cannot do it by fiddling with exchange rates; they will no longer have exchange rates to fiddle with. Nor can they hope to get much economic stimulation via their budgets, if your colleague Theo Waigel has his way; on anything like the Waigel rules for Euro-era fiscal rectitude, there will not be much scope for budgetary stimulation.

These jobless-haunted countries may try to improve things by making their labour markets more flexible (the polite phrase for cheaper labour, which means lower wages). But other European countries will presumably be doing the same thing, so the net gain by this route could be pretty small.

No, if there is to be rapid and effective help it will have to be done by the luckier countries putting money into the higher-unemployment ones, to help get their people back to work; which includes Germany putting money into France. Will Germany's voters agree to this without attaching any strings? Of course not.

They will understandably insist on having a supranational system for making sure the money goes to the right place, and is intelligently used, so as to produce the intended result.

In short, we shall at that moment be stepping across the shadow line between economic union and political union. From a European central bank to a European ministry of economic development is a shorter step than most of us had previously realised. And the other steps to a federalised Europe will follow on from there.

You Germans have been commendably honest about this in recent weeks. The arrival of a single European currency, several of you have bluntly said, makes political union inevitable. By political union you mean a federal Europe.

But a federal Europe requires a central European government with command over a single European army, and many other things, as well as a single European currency. And at this point many Frenchmen (and not only they) start to flinch. Here is the emerging crack in the 50-year-old edifice of French-German collaboration.

If that were all, it would be disturbing enough. Alas, it is not. In pushing your European agenda, Helmut, you and some of your friends have lately been suggesting that if Europe does not accept your sort of future it will slide back into the enmities of its bloody past, 1870 and 1914 and all that. The alternative to a federal Europe, you seem to be saying, is a Bismarckian Europe — perhaps even, God forbid, a Hitlerian Europe.

This is not just rather bullying talk. It is also nonsense.

It is nonsense because the appalling slaughter of two vast wars between 1914 and 1945 made Europeans profoundly reluctant to start sticking bayonets into each other again.

It is nonsense because most of today's Europe, unlike the Europe of Bismarck's or Hitler's time, is run by democratic governments; and although it is foolish to think that democracies never fight each other, it is true that they are generally slower to go to war than dictatorships are.

Even more to the point, these changed Europeans live in an utterly changed world. Until 1945, the world revolved around what Europeans said and did. Competition between the powers of Europe was a competition not just for European dominance but, because Europe was the centre of the world, for the role of the world's top dog. Here was cause enough, it seemed in those days, to fight like dogs.

Now Europe is a handful of contrite, middle-sized countries stuck between an American superpower to their West and the soon-to-be coming-again superpowerdoms of China and Russia to their east. The Europeans have far less to fight each other about these days, even if they felt like fighting at all, which they do not.

Your invocation of a long-gone Europe is alarming. Either you have not learned your history lessons or you are knowingly trying to frighten people with a falsehood.

Dear Helmut, you are a good German and a good European, not far from the end of your political days. You have a plan for Europe. But your plan, and your timetable for it, do not seem to be shared by most of the ordinary Europeans who would have to bear the consequences. Please, as your last great service to the peace of Europe, do not be bullheaded.

International Herald Tribune.

هكذا من الأصل

France's last good European?

To unite Europe around Franco- German reconciliation was Mitterrand's great dream and political achievement, says Richard Mayne

ON A cold dark November night in 1988, Francois Mitterrand addressed a huge crowd in front of the Panthéon in Paris. It was a ceremony to transfer to that national Valhalla the mortal remains of Jean Monnet, the founder of the European Union. For some statesmen it might have been a routine act of homage with electoral overtones. For Mr. Mitterrand, it was a genuine tribute — a confirmation that both men saw Europe as vital to France's future.

"I have never forgotten," Mr. Mitterrand wrote in his diary a few years earlier, "the enthusiasm of the early days: the European Congress at The Hague in 1947, the Home Congress in 1948, the passion that enflamed us all. To reconcile France and Germany in a greater community: we reacted rapidly then, two years after the death of Hitler and the collapse of his Reich."

Franco-German reconciliation was Mr. Mitterrand's prime European objective, as much as it was Mr. Monnet's. He always remembered how his grandparents wept at any mention of France's defeat by Prussia at Sedan in 1870. Born in once Franco-German war and marked, equivocally, by another, he had every reason to back the uniting of Europe; and if he voted against the European Defence Community, that was only because he still feared that it might revive German military strength.

He was never, in fact, as single-minded as Mr. Monnet. His enemies called him Florentine, thinking of long knives and Renaissance alleys, and his record on Europe included scepticism and disillusion as well as hope. Far more than Mr. Monnet, he saw the United States as both a safeguard and a political danger. American-based multinationals, he once remarked, were so dominant that "the real capital of Europe is Washington."

Long before talk of a single currency became general, he confided to his diary: "The Americans have dominated by their currency the Europe they liberated by their weapons. The Europeans will free themselves if they can create a currency of their own."

The Elysée chronicles of Mr. Mitterrand's talkative aide Jacques Attali, published verbatim but not perhaps to be taken as such, are full of presidential sideswipes at American presumption — including, ludicrously, envy of the terrestrial globe that Mr. Reagan kept in his office. When Mr. Mitterrand returned to Paris after a visit to Washington, he told Attali to get him one like it. To their joint discomfiture, no French maker could supply one off the shelf. So Mr. Mitterrand ordered 20 to be specially made, one for himself and the rest to be donated to visiting heads of state.

But if there was a touch of Gaullism in Mr. Mitterrand's attitude, he never expressed it in Gaullist, nationalist terms. He knew, as Mr. Monnet did, that only a united Europe could aspire to anything like equality with America; and at times of disillusion with progress in Europe his uneasiness again centred on Germany. "Germany grows as Europe shrinks," he wrote in 1973.

It was a worry that surfaced again at the prospect of Germany's unification. But meanwhile, in October 1982, he had met the newly elected Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Almost the first words that Mr. Kohl uttered, according to the Pepyslike Attali, were both ominous and assuring. "Make no mistake," said Mr. Mitterrand's stately visitor, "I am the last pro-European German chancellor." His uncle and his elder brother, he added, had been killed in the two world wars. Like Germans and many Frenchmen, he had visceral reasons for seeking Franco-German entente.

Quite clearly, Mr. Kohl and Mr. Mitterrand saw eye to eye on Europe, despite their coming from opposite ends of the political-party spectrum. Together, they solved the nagging problem of Margaret Thatcher's objection to Britain's budgetary contribution; together, they steered through the Single European Act; together, they helped to confect the bristling spatchcock of the Maastricht treaty. Together, had Mr. Mitterrand survived both politically doubt have inaugurated Europe's single currency, the ill-named and possibly illstarred Euro.

If Mr. Mitterrand had foreseen, back in 1982, his ultimate replacement by Jacques Chirac, should he have warned Chancellor Kohl that he was meeting "the last European French president?" From Mr. Chirac's public statements, it remains hard to tell. Running for office, he was all things to all men — so much so that one Paris journalist congratulated France on having elected at least two presidents in one.

Mr. Chirac has made semi-Gaullist noises and gestures, including his refusal to attend in person the late-March opening in Turin of the Inter-Governmental Conference to review the Maastricht treaty, popularly known as "Maastricht II." Yet he has backed the austerity plans of his Prime Minister Alain Juppe, designed partly to enable France to meet the Maastricht critiera for monetary union and the single currency. And although Jacques Delors has famously warned that the Franco-German relationship, so central to Europe, needs careful nurturing, there are few signs as yet that it risks falling into disrepair.

The prominence given to Mr. Delors' remark by the British media, in fact, may be a further example of the obsessive-seeming schadenfreude with which commentators on this side of the Channel greet any sign of rifts in Europe. From the far side of the Eurotunnel that links but still fails to unite the British and their neighbours, Franco-German relations look more solid than some would like to think. Jean Monnet repeatedly invoked "necessity" as a force in human affairs; and there is, whatever the obstacles, a sense of inevitability about the drawing-together of Germany and France.

Mr. Mitterrand was sometimes discouraged and often mistrusted: when he stood against De Gaulle in the first round of the 1965 French presidential election, Mr. Monnet voted for the centrist Jean Lecanuet. But in the two-candidate run-off, rather than endorse De Gaulle, Mr. Monnet voted for Mr. Mitterrand. Why? Because, as Mr. Monnet explained in his memoirs, Mr. Mitterrand had come out "in favour of 'a Europe built by the process already begun in the economic and technical fields.'"

In other words, he accepted that the process launched in the fifties not only had gathered overwhelming momentum but was also the right course of action for any foreseeable future.

With so many challenges facing Europe — Yugoslavia, unemployment, eastward enlargement, monetary union, agricultural reform — France and Germany have little alternative but to continue providing the motor for progress. Chancellor Kohl and President Chirac both agree that a European Germany is the only option for those who fear a German Europe. And if they, like the British, are divided and uncertain about the form that their and the EU's relations will or should take, they might well remember the words of a wise Frenchman — not Miterrand, but a friend of Mr. Monnet's: "We don't know where we're going: all we know is that we're going there together."

The writer is former personal assistant to Jean Monnet. The article is reprinted from the Independent.

Israel, Syria seek 1996 deal

(Continued from page 1)

hdrawal if Syria met its ms for peace. But Mr. rak followed the traditionIsraeli line of avoiding the ject publicly.

"I don't think this is the e to talk about withdraw" he said. "At the moment re is no reason to make icessions because we don't ow yet if the other side is dy to talk about peace, rmalisation, security and ter."

Syria meanwhile urged ael to grasp the "new nce" for peace after Mr. ristopher announced the v round of negotiations.

"It is necessary for Israel to ow the real and sincere ire not to lose the new nce contained in the nouncement made by ristopher after his talks in mascus," the government ly Tishrin said.

t voiced satisfaction over . Christopher's 16th peace ttle under a banner headline reporting closed-door talks between him and President Assad following the meeting attended by officials from both sides.

It also splashed on its front page a rare photograph showing Mr. Assad flanked by Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa and Syrian negotiators sitting across a table from Mr. Christopher and his aides, in a sign of the seriousness of talks.

Peace depends on "equal security arrangements" on both sides of the international border between Israel and Syria... and a total Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied" in the June 1967 war, Tishrin said.

The Syria Times said: "The battle of peace requires serious endeavours, perseverence, patience and wisdom."

"Syria rejects any bargain on the Arab lands and rights," it added.

Qouriea assails Israeli curbs

(Continued from page 1)

en refusing food since dnesday.

ive of them were refused ole as part of deals with Palestinians which saw re than 1,000 prisoners ed last week. Out of solidity another 20 decided to ain in prison.

he demonstrators called the Palestinian National thority to demand their nediate release and put k the elections.

ome 170 other prisoners set to go free on Monday ler the September deal to end Palestinian self-rule the West Bank.

One thousand prisoners e freed in a first wave of ases which followed the ing of the accord in tember, and a third wave been scheduled for May to mark the start of new talks on the final status of the Palestinain territories.

About 3,000 Palestinians are still being held in Israeli jails.

Israel on Saturday banned its nationals from entering West Bank town of Ramallah after learning that Palestinians planned a demonstration there to honour a murdered Hamas bomb-maker.

A military official in Tel Aviv said the ban would last until further notice following the announcement of a rally in Ramallah dedicated to Yahya Ayyash who died on Jan. 5.

Palestinian groups have accused Israeli agents of killing Ayyash, whose booby-trapped mobile telephone blew up in his face.

Clinton visit celebrates peace

(Continued from page 1)

Tuzla where U.S. troops ped in to separate Croat Muslim-led government ps.

osnian Croat media ac- d 300 government troops ed with anti-aircraft and hine guns of encroaching the Croat villages of egovic and Ularice.

t Bosanksa Krupa in tern Bosnia, British TO troops riposted after ing under rifle fire with- sustaining casualties.

Croatia, Mr. Clinton : "I have come not only upport the peace process the federation in Bosnia ween the Muslims and the ats but also the peaceful ement for the return of atian lands in Eastern onia."

Bosnian Croats and Muslims have been formal allies since a 1994 peace agreement ended a 10-month war the year before. But their federation, in part a marriage of convenience to fight Bosnian Serbs, has come under heavy strain in peace.

Since new year, the divided city of Mostar has suffered a series of tit-for-tat killings between Croats and Muslims.

Western officials have called on Mr. Tudjman to rein in the Croats, who are funded by Zagreb, and prevent a rift in the federation which could endanger the entire process.

Mr. Clinton later held talks with Mr. Tudjman at the airport in a room decorated with paintings and furniture from the presidential palace brought in for the day.

LA head to appear in court

(Continued from 12)

ed gang and killing or ng to kill a large number Lebanese with artillery lling," he added.

he source was referring to y Israeli and SLA shelling guerrilla-held villages or r surroundings north of Israeli-held zone in South Lebanon. Guerrillas attack the zone almost daily in a bid to liberate the south.

Mr. Lahd was also charged with "kidnapping citizens for long periods of time," the source said in reference to some 200 Arabs held captive by the SLA at Khiam jail in the zone.

Chechen rebels may lose friends, risk backlash

By Brian Killen
Reuter

MOSCOW — Chechen rebels who have killed 23 people and are holding about 200 hostages in Dagestan risk losing sympathy in the southern Russian region and could even stir up a hornets' nest of ethnic revenge.

The reaction by many Dagestanis to the cross-border attack and hostage seizure has been furious and has sparked fears of an anti-Chechen backlash in a region where blood feuds are common.

"With every hour that passes the anti-Chechen mood of the local population is increasing," said Russian television commentator Nikolai Svanidze. "This could lead to an inter-ethnic explosion."

There have already been some protests in Dagestan following Tuesday's attack on the town of Kizlyar, where the "Lone Wolf" group of Chechen rebels killed 14 local civilians, seven policemen and two Russian soldiers.

The rebels held about 2,000 people hostage for a day in Kizlyar's hospital before moving in a convoy of buses to the Dagestani village of Pervomayskaya, near the border with Chechenya, where they are surrounded by Russian troops.

"Relations will never again be the same," one Dagestani interior ministry soldier told Reuters correspondent Philippa Fletcher at a checkpoint outside Pervomayskaya.

He said he came from a nearby village of about 1,600 people which had taken in 1,800 Chechen refugees after the breakaway region's war with Russia erupted in December 1994.

"We fed them and now look how they have thanked us," he snarled in a typical reaction from around the crisis zone.

It was not clear how widespread resentment as in Dagestan, but Russian political commentators said the second major foray by Chechen fighters outside their home region could backfire on separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev.

"The Caucasus will never forgive Dudayev's men for this treachery," wrote Nikolai Astashkin of the armed forces daily Krasnaya Zvezda.

Mr. Dudayev has been trying to win backing from his neighbours in his fight against the Russians. Until now, many Dagestanis and other people in the mountainous north Caucasus have been sympathetic to his cause but have not got involved in fighting.

The Chechens and Dagestanis have close ethnic links and traditionally follow the same form of Sunni Muslim. They also have a common history of resistance against Russia.

In the mid-19th century, Muslim warriors from the eastern Caucasus united under Imam Shamil to repel Russian invaders in a holy war. Shamil's name is still a symbol of resistance against Russia for the mountain people.

But there is little chance of Mr. Dudayev rallying his neighbours behind him today. Many say the Chechen separatists discredited themselves and their religion with the attack on Kizlyar and a similar raid on the town of Budennovsk last June.

About 120 people were killed in Budennovsk, which is in the Stavropol region just north of Chechenya.

The Dagestanis' anger is unlikely to translate into military reprisals.

The people of Dagestan, a region of 32 different nationalities and several different languages, are neither as warlike nor as well-armed as Mr. Dudayev's men, who have long prided themselves on their fighting ability and have defied the might of Russia's army for more than a year.

There are some 200,000 Chechens living in Dagestan out of the total population of some two million, including thousands of refugees, and they might bear the brunt of any resentment.

Some Dagestanis have called for them to be expelled.

The Budennovsk crisis produced a similar reaction and some local Chechens did leave their homes but there were no purges.

Gramm draws big crowds in Iowa, feels momentum

By Alan Elsner
Reuter

CLINTON, Iowa — Senate majority leader Bob Dole may be the heavy favourite to win the first major test of the 1996 presidential race in Iowa next month but Texas senator Phil Gramm is pulling big crowds and beginning to generate some enthusiasm in the state.

On a campaign swing through snowy eastern Iowa on Thursday, Mr. Gramm attracted some 550 people in the small town of Eldridge, another 400 in Dubuque and 100 cheering supporters in Clinton, on the banks of the frozen Mississippi River.

In a barn on a farm outside of Muscatine, Mr. Gramm addressed 40 silent farmers who sat on bales of hay to listen to his message. Noncommittal before they heard him speak, most said they were impressed.

Such numbers may not sound very large but in Iowa terms they are significant. Only around 120,000 Republicans are expected to attend the 2,041 local party precinct meetings Feb. 12 to choose their nominee to face President Clinton next November.

"The conventional wisdom is that Dole is going to win 50 per cent of the vote here but I think we're gaining ground. I feel the momentum growing. When you get turnouts like these, you know something is happening," a visibly upbeat Gramm told reporters on his campaign bus on Thursday.

Pollster Arthur Miller at the University of Iowa, who recently conducted an in-depth study of the Republican electorate, concluded that Mr. Dole's support was solid among probably Caucus voters and predicted he would take at least half the vote. But there is some ancedotal evidence that Mr. Dole's support may be soft in some parts of the state.

The stakes in Iowa are immense. Even if Mr. Dole scores his expected victory, whoever comes second and to a lesser extent third will gain a week of intense media attention as the race moves to New Hampshire for the first primary of the campaign Feb. 20.

Anyone below third place probably faces oblivion.

"If you don't run first, second or third in Iowa, you're out of the race," said Mr. Gramm.

Organisation is the key to success in Iowa and Mr. Gramm's aides say he has the best grassroots organisation of any of the nine candidates. He has spent over 60 days in the state, compared to Mr. Dole's 28 days, and is pulling audiences that are as big and sometimes bigger than the majority leader's.

"Of all the races I've ever been in, I've never seen a race where the frontrunner has less enthusiasm. There is growing concern that Mr. Dole could not beat bill clinton and a growing conviction he would not really change America," said Mr. Gramm.

On the stump, after months of ineffective campaigning when he often came across as harsh and uncaring, Mr. Gramm finally seems to have hit his stride. He has tried to soften his image, presenting a more human face with self-deprecating anecdotes about growing up poor in Georgia, about failing three grades in school and about his somewhat bumbling efforts to woo his wife Wendy.

The underlying message remains the same. Mr. Gramm promises to balance the budget in four years by ruthlessly trimming the government programmes which he says don't help people. He will cut taxes, force welfare recipients back to work and he will not make compromises with special interests.

Mr. Gramm, who at the beginning of the campaign said he would not criticise Mr. Dole, now bears down on him with withering sarcasm, calling him "a proud and effective moderate for 35 years." And, adds Mr. Gramm, "No great cause in history was ever won under the banner of moderation."

In Mr. Gramm's eyes, Mr. Dole is a compromiser and deal-cutter, not to be trusted by conservatives. "When was the last time you heard Bob Dole respond to Bill Clinton when you said, 'Bob hit the nail on the head. Bob told it like it was?'"

"How on earth will Bob Dole convince people that Bill Clinton is wishy-washy?"

Fears of civil war in South Africa's Zulu province

By Craig Doonan
Reuter

DURBAN, South Africa — South Africa's Zulu heartland could explode into open war unless something is done soon to ease political tension in the region, analysts and peace workers say.

Despite South Africa's peaceful, transition to democracy, violence is rife in Kwazulu-Natal, home to the country's eight million Zulus.

"I believe we're in a low-intensity civil war already. The situation is uncontrollable. It's beyond any understanding," independent violence monitor Danny Chetty told Reuters recently.

After a steady decline in political killings in Kwazulu-Natal since South Africa's all-race elections 20 months ago, the toll from political murders jumped from 37 in November to 71 during December.

"We are concerned our province is fast sliding into a state of undeclared war," President Nelson Mandela's ruling African National Congress (ANC) said in a statement.

The ANC holds power at central government level but lost the elections in Kwazulu-Natal province to the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) of chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Mr. Mandela's longtime rival.

Of the 71 people killed in December, 38 died in three politically motivated massacres in the south of the province and some independent observers fear increased bloodshed as the region heads for local government elections due in May.

Chetty, based on the province's volatile south coast where much of the recent bloodshed has taken place, said he had recently written a letter to Mandela out of desperation.

"The situation has become totally unacceptable and unbearable," he said.

"I get the impression that nobody cares what's going on. People are literally dying like flies," he said, citing the misery of arranging a funeral for 18 of the 19 people butchered in a Christmas morning attack on a rural settlement.

Herbert Vilakazi, a social scientist at the University of Zululand, said the ANC and Inkatha had to resolve their differences through talks to avoid further bloodletting.

"Unless this happens soon, the problem will not be solved until there is civil war which will then shock us to the truth...

"That's where we're going. Ultimately it will breed civil war, anarchy, a lack of development and moral degeneration."

More than 14,000 people have been killed in the decade-long battle for political power between ANC and Inkatha supporters in Kwazulu-Natal.

Mr. Buthelezi's Inkatha is seeking strong provincial powers that would allow self-rule, which the ANC maintains would leads to the province's seceding from the rest of the country.

Inkatha entered South Africa's April 1994 election only a little over a week before the poll after it was agreed that foreign mediators would look into the conflict over the future form of the South African State.

The IFP walked out of talks to draw up South Africa's post-apartheid constitution early last year because mediation had not yet begun. Tension between the IFP and ANC has since grown steadily.

Mr. Mandela recently appealed to the IFP to return to the Constitutional Assembly but Buthelezi reacted angrily, accusing the president of ignoring the mediation agreement and saying Mr. Mandela was not a "man of his word."

"What moral right has a man who treats us with such contempt to expect us to take his call for the return of the IFP to the Constitutional Assembly seriously?" he said.

Political scientist Alexander Johnston of the University of Natal said that despite public disagreements between the two leaders and their parties, there was hope.

He said one way of getting round the international mediation issue was to ensure a constitution was drafted for Kwazulu-Natal that would satisfy Inkatha.

"The violence is indeed horrific and a compromise on the (provincial) constitution could help," he said.

Inkatha spokesman Ed Tillett said both agreement on a provincial constitution and international mediation were needed for peace.

"It's not that the IFP is expecting anything unreasonable. We entered a solemn pact regarding international mediation. It's simply a case of them honouring a solemn pact they entered into," he says.

But the ANC accuses Inkatha of scuppering talks about mediation last year and of using the issue to justify violence.

"When people die, they say this will only stop when international mediation comes. It seems they say people will have to die to put sense in our heads that there is an animal called international mediation," said ANC official Bheki Cele.

"A political solution won't help. What we have to do is put the known perpetrators of violence in prison," he said.

Arab Gulf states target deficit-free budgets in 2000

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states have set a target by the year 2000 to eliminate the deficit in their budgets, banking on stable oil prices and reforms to rationalise expenditure and expand the private sector.

Most of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have made clear they are determined to wipe out the shortfall which ushered in a new stage in the mid-1980s characterised by a slowdown in growth and other economic woes.

Experts said GCC states could realise that target if they stick to economic reforms and oil prices maintained their current levels.

"With an oil price of $16-$17 and growth in the private sector and non-oil income, I believe the deficit could disappear," a Gulf banker said. "But this depends on how serious Gulf states are in keeping spending low. Any major increase in government expenditure could offset growth in other sectors and keep the deficit, even though it might be lower."

GCC states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — have managed to gradually reduce the deficit over the past few years due to spending cuts and increases in non-oil revenues.

From a record $57 billion in 1991, when Gulf nations financed the costly liberation of Kuwait, the shortfall was slashed to around $17.3 billion in 1994 and nearly $9.6 billion in 1995.

Two of the GCC countries — Saudi Arabia and Oman — have so far released their 1996 budgets and reforms appeared to be their main feature.

Saudi Arabia's budget deficit of $4.9 billion was forecast slightly higher than the 1995 shortfall of $4 billion. But economists said they believed the actual shortfall could be slashed by the end of the year as *non-oil income will likely* rise and the budget was based on lower oil prices.

King Fahd, who last week handed over power temporarily to his brother because of illness, said this year Riyadh would press ahead with reforms and the budget deficit would gradually recede before it vanishes in 2000.

Saudi Arabia's sixth development plan for 1995-1999 forecast spending at $200 billion but the effects of such low expenditure could be cushioned by a projected growth in the private sector and high public and private investment, set at between 15 and 19 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

"The deficit is expected to gradually decline after 1996 and a balance between revenues and spending could be achieved by the year 2000," Omani minister of national economy, Ahmad Ibn Abdul Nabi, told reporters in Muscat this week.

The plan forecast spending at $26.23 billion compared with around $28 billion for the previous five-year plan. The decline depressed the estimated deficit to $1.39 billion from $5.82 billion.

Figures for 1996 showed the shortfall was also slashed to $500 million from $800 million in 1995.

Kuwaiti officials have also spoken about a balanced budget by the year 2000 following the completion of post-war reconstruction. In the UAE, the government said it had no plans to raise spending in 1996 even if oil prices improved.

The UAE projected expenditure at around $4.89 billion in 1995 and a deficit of $290 million compared with $380 million in 1994.

"The budget in 1996 will be almost equivalent to that of 1995," finance and industry ministry undersecretary, Naser Al Noweis, said in local press remarks last month. "We are not worried about the deficit as we are working to gradually restore balance between expenditure and revenues."

According to bankers in Saudi Arabia, the combined GCC budget deficit *accounted for as high as 8.65* per cent of the GDP in 1994. The level was nearly halved to around 4.8 per cent in 1995 and could be lower this year.

They noted GCC revenues could improve in the near future as non-oil earnings were *steadily growing* and new gas projects would come on stream.

"The economic picture for GCC states looks all right," one banker said. "Their expectations are that oil prices will stabilise in the next few years and privatisations will yield new income. But all this hinges on how far they will go in reforms and the private sector's willingness to participate."

Lebanon says it will privatise postal service

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon Friday took its first step towards privatising state utilities, announcing that it will turn over its postal service to the private sector.

Posts and Communication Minister Al Fadel Chalaq *said he will invite bids next* week from private companies to take over the service.

"My ministry has decided to launch an open invitation next week for private companies interested in bidding to take over rehabilitation and management of the posts services inside and outside Lebanon, including both ordinary and fast mail," Mr. Chalaq told a news conference.

This will be the first state-run service in Lebanon to be taken over by the private sector.

The postal service deteriorated drastically during the *1975-1990 civil war and even* in Beirut a letter can still take two weeks to travel from one city district to the next.

Mail sent or received from abroad, on the other hands, often arrives in a few days.

Mr. Chalaq did not make clear whether bidding would be open to foreign companies but a source at the ministry told Reuters by telephone later that foreign companies would be eligible.

A German consulting company was helping the ministry prepare the privatisation, the source said.

Privatisation is a controversial issue in Lebanon, *with many politicians* opposed despite pressure from the banking and industrial sectors to go ahead because the state cannot handle the immense demands of reconstruction single-handed.

The government of billionaire Prime Minister Rafik al Hariri agreed in February 1994 to partially privatise the oil, transport and electricity industries.

But it has taken no steps to do so, and Mr. Hariri said in June 1995 the government will not privatise utilities until they are rehabilitated and can bring a good price. This would not happen soon, he said.

However, government sources have recently told Reuters the administration was taking a fresh look at the privatisation issue and that developments could be *expected in 1996.*

Foreign companies are already heavily involved in rehabilitating the electricity, telephone and water sectors. French and Finnish companies have set up cellular telephone networks but they will be handed over to the state after 20 years.

The giant Solidere company has taken over reconstruction of war-torn central Beirut and a private company is handling garbage disposal in the capital.

Ministry sources said the postal service has about 2,000 workes but only 900 currently work. Mr. Chalaq said the 900 would be taken on by the private company which takes over the service.

Morocco extends major crackdown on smuggling

RABAT (R) — Morocco Friday revealed plans to extend a massive crackdown on smuggling which has cost the state billions of dollars in lost revenue from taxes and ordered security forces to seize contraband goods across the country.

"After several meetings between government committees, we decided to reinforce the ongoing operation against smuggling and bring those responsible to justice," Hafid Benhachem, a senior official at the interior ministry, told a news conference.

Dozens of businessmen have been arrested, most of them in the financial centre of Casablanca, and tonnes of merchandise including thousands of television sets, radios and satellite dishes imported illegally were seized in recent weeks, he said.

Mr. Benhachem, deputising for Interior Minister Driss Basri, said he could not give exact figures at present of the total loss to the state coffers due to activities on the previously-tolerated grey market in Morocco.

Independent analysts estimate the shortfall of direct and indirect taxes at $1.5 billion a year.

Mr. Benhachem, who said hundreds of para-military gendarmes, police units and customs officers had been mobilised for the job, admitted that more than 60 per cent of television sets sold in Morocco in 1989 were smuggled.

Deep divisions in Yemen over reform

SANAA (AFP) — Divisions among Yemen's ruling coalition has deepened as it struggled to implement a second phase of biting economic reforms in one of the world's poorest countries.

The General People's Congress (GPC) led by President Ali Abdallah Saleh wants a sudden increase in the prices of some foodstuffs and petrol.

But its coalition partner the Islamic party Al Islah is demanding that price hikes be brought in gradually to soften the blow and avoid angering the people.

The GPC's central committee highlighted that "economic and administrative reforms are an imperative necessity... to restructure Yemen's economy."

And the party tried to down play its differences with Al Islah promising to "re*medy as soon as possible the* unjustified and sudden rise in food prices."

Under the second phase of reforms, corn and flour are to rise by 50 per cent and petrol by 68 per cent, economic leaders in Sanaa said.

The costs of electricity, water and communications are also to double in January, while the government is planning to end subsidies for electricity and water as well as oil products and imports of corn and flour.

Al Islah is not against the principle of reform, which also includes a privatisation programme, but is concerned about the way it is being implemented.

Rising jobless nearly 3.8m in Germany

NUREMBERG, Germany (AFP) — The number of people out of work in Germany has risen significantly to nearly 3.8 million, or 9.9 per cent of the active population, according to official figures.

The Federal Labour Office said 3,790,600 people were registered unemployed in December, 211,800 more than in November and 230,900 more than the figure a year earlier.

The December unemployment rate was worse than expected by analysts, who had predicted a figure of 9.5-9.7 per cent of the active population. The November rate was 9.2 per cent.

In western Germany, the number of people looking for work rose by 142,000, going to 2,677,500, or 8.7 per cent of the active population compared with 8.2 per cent in November.

In the former East Germany, the jobless figure rose by over 70,000 to 1,113,100 compared with November, going from 14 to 14.9 per cent of the active population.

The Federal Labour Office recently warned that the number of people unemployed in Germany was likely to reach the four million figure again this year.

A slowing of the economy and rise in unemployment, attributed by most analysts to high employment costs, wage increases and the rise of the mark, are causing employers and trade unions to change traditional attitudes.

Industrialists are moving some production abroad and union leaders are showing more concern to secure employment than to increased pay.

Corrected for seasonal variations, the number of people out of work in Germany rose by 68,000 from November to December, with 33,000 more in western Germany and 35,000 more in the east, the labour office said.

Although the bad winter weather slowing economic activity explained part of the jump in the jobless figure, this was also due to a "stagnation of economic growth and lesser political measures of support for the labour market," labour office chief Bernhard Jagoda said.

Meanwhile, the German federal state deficit last year hit 50.2 billion marks ($34.8 billion), 1.2 billion marks more than provided for in the 1995 finance (budget) law, German Finance Minister Theo Waigel announced Friday.

The actual deficit was up very slightly from the 50.1-billion-mark deficit chalked up for the 1994 budget, the minister added.

The state cut its spending in 1995 from the previous year, the first year-on-year reduction since 1953. Spending was down by 1.4 per cent last year to 464.7 billion marks, far less than the initially planned 477.7 billion.

Tax receipts were 16.6 billion marks less than forecast (382.7 billion marks), due to a slowdown in economic activity and an increase in unemployment, the finance ministry has said. That shortfall is larger than the one of around 10 billion marks the ministry had forecast last October. It led the government to limit spending, making it possible to save two billion, Mr. Waigel said.

While tax receipts finance the great majority of the budget, the deficit was reduced to a total of 50.2 billion marks last year thanks to additional receipts, such as from privatisations and profits of government-owned companies.

The draft budget for this year calls for expenditures of 452 billion marks.

According to the Federal Statistics Office on Thursday, the German public deficits — which include the results of the 16 states, the communes and the social insurance funds — reached 3.6 per cent of GDP last year — well over the limit of three per cent that is one of the conditions set in the European Union's Maastricht Treaty for EU members wanting to take part in the planned single currency in 1997.

Mr. Waigel blamed the overrun on the states, communes and social insurance funds. And on Friday, he insisted on the fact that it was the federal government that had paid the bulk of the cost of reunification.

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STYRT

TOBENN

BESPIC

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: THE _____ "_____"

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: HENNA GAUZE EXPEND FROSTY
Answer: How Dad felt after a day at the mall — "SPENT"

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You want to complete mental career activities early so that later you can be practical and gain advancements. Try to set up a better budget.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your intimate wishes are very important to you at this time, but you have to be more practical in order to gain them when you desire.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Don't confide your wishes to others or they could easily spoil things for you at this time. Spend as much time as you can with the ones you love.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You have ideas about how to gain your fondest aims today, but these need revision in order to make them successful in the manner you desire.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Don't enter into any disagreement between a family tie and a public figure. Spend time with someone who is sophisticated.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Plan how to use data you have received so that you can expand your interests and become mere successful at this time.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You can go from one activity to another today, but it is best to adhere to the best one otherwise you could make serious errors.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) One who is contrary to your best interests give you trouble during the daytime today, but later tonight you can be your charming self.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Do something which will show you are a true humanitarian today. Plan new outlets of prosperity for yourself the days ahead.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You have made appointments for recreation with close friends but you find that you have to make slight changes at this time.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Soothe the feelings of one who is upset at home and avoid a big disagreement. Don't do anything yourself to start a altercation.

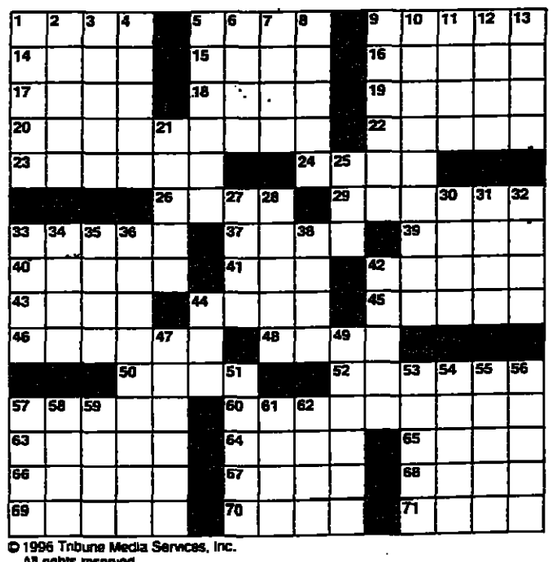
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Hit on the right philosophy to follow in the days ahead and meet any test which is presented later in the day to be dealt with.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

THE Daily Crossword by Virginia B. Hopewell

ACROSS
1 Invitation initials
5 Breathe heavily
9 Radiant
14 Eros
15 S-shaped curve
16 Augusta's place
17 Comic actor, Jacques
18 "The — in Winter"
19 King of rock
20 November doings
22 In the — (if it should happen)
23 Thoroughfare
24 Yeats' land
26 — up (clinches)
29 Black ink items
33 Give a leg up
37 Deserve
39 Turkey — (dance)
40 Lab heaters
41 Past
42 Sacher —
43 Money drawer
44 Card game
45 Beginning
46 Father Time accessory
48 Gingrich
50 Had on
52 Throws
57 Family car
60 Sweetheart
63 Make happy
64 Lass
65 Farm measure
66 Labyrinths
67 Otherwise
68 Fill up
69 Motionless
70 Forest creature
71 NC college

DOWN
1 Ranks
2 Blue pigment
3 One casting a ballot
4 "The — Is Right"
5 Courteous
6 Exchange premium
7 Sign gas
8 Tightly stretched
9 Eastern VIPs
10 Texas city
11 Reside
12 — years (elderly)
13 Occident
21 Tries out
25 Author Fleming
27 Feeble
28 Astronomer Carl
30 Flubs
31 — bag
32 Proofreader's word
33 Wagers
34 Of the ear
35 Solely
36 Brine
38 Memory
42 — pole
44 Sunday speech: abbr.
47 Truthful
49 Captain Ahab
51 Barely defeated
53 Humiliate
54 Outspoken
55 Have an — the ground
56 Dutch painter
57 Half: pref.
58 Enthusiasm
59 Stupefy
61 Nettle
62 Gaelic



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Yesterday's Puzzle Solved:

S	A	S	H			P	A	T	H		N	A	P	S
A	F	O	O	L		A	S	H	E		A	R	E	A
G	O	R	G	E		S	H	E	A		C	R	A	D
E	R	A	S	E	R	H	E	A	D		M	O	S	E
T	E	S	H		M	A	N		S	H	O	W	E	R
			E	G	O			L	E	A	S	H		
E	M	B	A	R		F	R	I	T	Z		E	V	A
T	I	L	D	E		O	A	F		A	M	A	I	D
A	G	O		D	R	O	N	E		R	E	D	I	O
		C	R	I	E	D			A	D	A			
D	A	K	O	T	A		S	A	X		T	E	R	O
E	C	H	O		L	E	T	T	E	R	H	E	A	D
T	U	E	S		I	L	I	E		A	E	R	I	E
E	T	A	T		S	I	P	S		W	A	I	S	T
R	E	D	S		M	E	E	T			D	E	E	S

Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff

هكذا من الأصل

Industrial Development Bank boosts profit by 118 per cent

AMMAN (Petra) — The Industrial Development Bank (IDB) made record earnings in 1995 securing JD4.8 million in net profit compared to JD2.8 million in 1994, thus registering an increase of 118 per cent.

The announcement was made by the bank's general manager Rajab Al Saad who noted that the profits came as a result of efforts on the part of the bank's staff aimed at cutting down on expenses and increasing revenues.

He said that the bank made these profits despite its increased loans for industrial purposes in the past year which witnessed major increases in economic growth.

The IDB's overall revenues in 1995 amounted to JD7.3 million compared to around JD4.7 million in the previous year, and the bank's general expenses dropped by around 14 per cent in 1995 compared with the expenses figure of 1994, added Mr. Saad.

Referring to the bank's assets, Mr. Saad said they increased to JD135 million, up from JD124 million in 1994 noting that the past year also witnessed a substantial increase in the volume of loans given by the IDB to finance industrial and tourism schemes in the Kingdom. He said the total loans amounted to JD101 million compared to JD91 million in 1994.

At the same time, Mr. Saad said, the bank's shareholders' equity rose from JD 16 million to JD28 million due to the increases in the bank's reserves and the increase in the amount of the bank's capital.

Referring to loans, Mr. Saad said that in 1995 the bank gave 137 loans totalling JD21 million designed to create annual national revenues estimated at JD25 million and create, 1,250 new jobs.

Mr. Saad said that the IDB last year reached an agreement with Germany to provide the bank with a DM5 million loan to be relent to Jordanian industrial businesses in the form of soft long-term loans to help them install environment safety equipment.

Mr. Saad said the bank intends to adopt a set of measures to increase investments and offer banking services to agents and customers such as financing exports and offering bank guarantees.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANISED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 13/01/1996

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	160	37170	232.500	232.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	486	2137	4.420	4.400
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK.	250	308	1.210	1.230
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	1000	2520	2.520	2.520
THE HOUSING BANK	100	485	4.870	4.850
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	525	1460	2.800	2.790
JORDAN GULF BANK	24000	25450	1.080	1.060
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	3850	14091	3.660	3.660
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	1453	5136	3.580	3.820
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	8363	7403	.890	.880
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	1318	1779	1.370	1.350
BANKS SECTOR	41502	97938	INDEX NUMBER: 184.98 CHANGE : -0.297	
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	17329	29773	1.730	1.710
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	683	1194	1.700	1.750
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	1515	1498	1.000	.990
JORDAN PRESS FOUNDATION / ALRA'I	230	2362	10.300	10.310
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	750	1615	2.160	2.160
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	3512	12291	3.530	3.500
ZARKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	3175	3929	1.240	1.250
UNIFIED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	9500	21729	2.290	2.280
UNION LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	10750	10783	1.020	.990
SERVICES SECTOR	47444	85173	INDEX NUMBER: 176.12 CHANGE : -0.497	
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	29501	108545	3.680	3.680
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	450	1436	3.220	3.190
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	1477	14866	10.130	10.040
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	2387	8853	3.710	3.710
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	1600	12240	7.700	7.650
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	942	4165	4.420	4.420
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	5250	11288	2.200	2.150
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	2361	17588	7.520	7.450
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	5000	27000	5.400	5.400
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	16949	9765	.590	.570
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	4400	6248	1.420	1.420
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	1000	1628	1.660	1.630
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	4800	4898	1.020	1.010
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	500	793	1.610	1.570
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	200	206	1.030	1.030
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	1900	3325	1.740	1.750
KAMEHER INVESTMENT	4150	6433	1.560	1.550
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	6003	19499	[illegible]	[illegible]
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	3660	7101	1.960	1.940
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	400	552	1.400	1.380
[illegible] READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	7000	15930	2.280	2.380
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	6600	9008	1.370	1.370
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGATIABLE OIL INDUSTRI	927	1474	1.490	1.600
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	107490	292971	INDEX NUMBER: 122.13 CHANGE : -0.274	
GRAND TOTAL	196436	476082	INDEX NUMBER: 153.89 CHANGE : -0.294	

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 208407
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 196915

Gold prices ease; bounce after rally to $400

LONDON (R) — Gold prices retreated early Friday but bullion dealers called it a healthy correction after a rally this week to the highest levels in more than 2½ years.

But bullion rallied later to close at $399.35, up 40 cents on Thursday's closing and still within touch of the $400 high fixing on Wednesday afternoon.

"This market is not going back," a dealer said.

Others said good support buying had been seen around the day's low of $396.00

Overhanging business was the expiry of gold options on New York's COMEX gold futures markets after business Friday.

Option holders have the right but not the obligation to buy a commodity at a stated price. Currently the key price on COMEX gold options is $400, just above the market.

It was debatable whether the gold price would go above $400 in time to make exercising the option viable. If it did not, some dealers forecast a sell-off taking gold as far down as $392.

"It had some trouble at $398/$399 after climbing so fast, so we can expect some sharp corrections," one said.

Professional selling accelerated by producer-origin sales was said to be behind Friday's early retreat. The professionals bought back their earlier sales after the price stabilised to spark the rally later.

"It would be very disappointing if it broke down through $390," the dealer added.

Silver finished unchanged at $5.52 having moved lower with gold early.

"All the excitement and the volatility is in gold, which has meant silver has been very limited in the business it has attracted," a silver dealer said.

"The relative indifference to platinum and palladium has also rubbed off in silver," he added.

Platinum and palladium finished little changed, edging off the floor with gold and silver towards the close.

Platinum ended at $417.00 up $0.70, and palladium was unchanged at $129.00.

Most Chinese firms foresee no early business improvement

BEIJING (AFP) — More than 70 per cent of Chinese enterprises foresee no early improvement in the macroeconomic environment, expressing fears of further rapid price rises and capital shortages, a survey has said.

Some 26.6 per cent of the 10,000 enterprises surveyed in November said they expected the economic climate to take a turn for the worse, while 46.9 per cent predicted there would be no change, State Statistical Bureau (SSB) spokesman Qiu Xiaohua said, adding that 25.7 per cent had forecast an improvement.

There was no immediate explanation of what responses were obtained from the remaining 0.8 per cent.

The survey — the fourth carried out this year by a new centre within the SSB set up to strengthen monitoring of economic fluctuations and their impact on entreprises — indicated increasing dissatisfaction among business people.

The proportion of pessimistic firms was up from 26.2 per cent in January, 24.2 per cent in June and 25.3 per cent in August, while those that expected no change had risen from 41.5 per cent, 34.5 per cent and 43.2 per cent in the previous three surveys respectively.

Medium-sized enterprises were the most downbeat, with 31 per cent predicting a downturn in the economic situation, compared with 22.8 per cent and 23.5 per cent for large and small ventures respectively, the latest survey revealed.

Non-state firms were more optimistic than their loss-making state-owned counterparts, with 22.2 per cent of the former and 27.9 per cent of the latter expecting increasing difficulties, it said.

Among the main concerns cited by enterpreneurs were the effects on production of the government's tight monetary policy aimed at curbing inflation, which prompted more than 50 per cent of those surveyed to complain of capital shortages.

Mr. Qiu, at a press briefing here, said loans to enterprises this year would total 600 billion yuan ($72.2 billion), just above the target of 570 billion yuan.

The "comparatively tight monetary policy" would continue in 1996, with the scale of loans being only a "little bit higher" than this year, while greater emphasis would be put on targetting the funds at efficient firms, he said.

Year-on-year inflation was running at 9.2 per cent in November, bringing the level for the first 11 months of 1995 down to 15.4 per cent from an annual figure of 21.7 per cent in 1994.

Mr. Qiu reiterated that "inflation will be within the planned target of 15 per cent" for the year.

Nevertheless, surveyed business executives were still concerned about continued strong pressure on prices, while the SSB spokesman acknowledged that "there is no certain mechanism to guarantee stability of the macro-business cycle."

Other problems cited by Mr. Qiu included "prominent" debts among enterprises and declining efficiency," with nearly half of the 10,000 firms reporting falls in net profits.

Meanwhile a senior official with the State Commission for Economic Relations and Trade said that 160 state enterprises in 18 pilot cities had been approved for bankruptcy between October last year and June 1995.

The bankruptcies and other market reforms swelled the ranks of China's surplus labourers by 1.33 million during the same period, said the official who asked not to be identified.

Admitting that resettling redundant workers was a difficult task, the official said the reforms would be deepend next year "but always working on the principle of maintaining stability."

He also said the reforms did not pressage a move to do away with the state sector altogether.

"Our aim is to combine public ownership with the market economy. We do not advocate privatisation," he said.

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Decision to close 28 driving schools in Amman to be reconsidered

☆☆ THE MINISTRY of Interior will Sunday reexamine its decision to close 28 driving schools in Amman because of the high rate of trainees who were unable to pass the driving tests. According to the terms for licensing driving schools, the minimum passing rate among the trainees should be 60 per cent. The secretary-general of the ministry told a delegation from the association of owners of public cars and taxi offices that the concerned parties would come together to try find a suitable solution. A member of the association has called on the ministry to reconsider its decision to close the schools and proposed studying the situation on a case-by-case basis and refer the schools found in violation to courts. The association's official, Abdul Karim Al Mashayekh, pointed out that the schools should not be solely blamed for the high number of failures among the trainees as there are many factors that are involved in the examination procedures. He referred to the regulations governing driving schools and said that as regulations are more than 17 years old, they no longer correspond to the number of cars, population density and growth as well as modernisation and development (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

Inspection teams to include women

☆☆ THE NEW plan adopted by the Amman Supply Department is to include women in the teams monitoring foodstuff prices. The women inspectors will be responsible for detecting violations and carrying out the necessary measures (Al Aswaq).

Doctor found practising without proper certificate loses licence; clinic closed

☆☆ A DOCTOR who holds a bachelor degree in medicine was found that she was practising her profession illegally, having obtained her general secondary examination certificate by forgery. As such the Ministry of Health and the Jordan Medical Association have dismissed the doctor and removed her name from the list of practising doctors. The clinic she opened to practise medicine was also closed. The woman had visited Beirut many years ago and managed to forge the general secondary examination certificate that enabled her to enter Lebanese universities and obtain a degree in medicine. She then returned to Amman, submitted her papers to the concerned authorities and was accepted as a general practitioner. Through this way she was able to open her private clinic and receive patients. However, upon checking the files at the association, it was found that the certificates were not authenticated by the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs which, in due course, requested further information about the doctor's former education. Further checks showed that the doctor, identified only as F. Gh., had no record of the general secondary examination certificate and wider investigations revealed the forgery of certificate. The doctor has been referred to court charged with forgery (Al Ra'i)

Company owning Marriott Hotel to increase capital to JD 9 million

☆☆ THE ARAB International Hotels Company will be floating 1.3 million shares for private subscription to increase its capital to JD 9 million. The price of the share will be determined by a committee from the Ministry of Industry and Trade. According to the company's chairman, Nadim Mouasher, the firm plans to build an additional wing to the Marriott Hotel, which is owned by the company. Other plans which will cost JD 12 million will include touristic projects at the Dead Sea shore and other selected areas (Al Aswaq)

A total of 121,249 persons apply for government jobs

☆☆ A TOTAL of 121,249 employment applications were submitted to the Civil Service Commission until the beginning of this month. Of the number, 67,783 from females and 53,466 from males, the commission was able to appoint 5,346 applicants. According to a report from the information directorate, 286 of the job-seekers held doctorate degrees, 1,257 had masters degree, 594 possessed high diplomas and 37,663 hold bachelor degrees (Al Ra'i)

Financial Markets — Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

Eurocurrency Interest Rates — Date: 12/1/1996

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.37	5.31	5.18	5.12
Sterling Pound	6.31	6.25	6.18	6.18
Deutsche Mark	3.50	3.37	3.25	3.25
Swiss Franc	1.37	1.37	1.37	1.37
French Franc	4.25	4.37	4.37	4.37
Japanese Yen	0.25	0.31	0.35	0.43
European Currency Unit	4.97	4.90	4.81	4.75

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin — Date: 13/1/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0941	1.0996
Deutsche Mark	0.4900	0.4925
Swiss Franc	0.6082	0.6112
French Franc	0.1429	0.1436
Japanese Yen*	0.6715	0.6749
Dutch Guilder	0.4375	0.4397
Swedish Krona	******	******
Italian Lira*	0.0449	0.0451
Belgian Franc	******	******

* Per 100

Other Currencies — Date: 13/1/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8780
Lebanese Lira*	0.044225	0.044550
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1933
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma*	0.2875	0.3150

JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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Federation threatens U.S. over horse ban

BRUSSELS (R) — The United States may lose the right to organise major equestrian events unless it rescinds an Olympic ban on some horses infected by a tick-borne disease, the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) said on Friday.

"The outcome of the debate could have far-reaching consequences for the equestrian sport at an international level," FEI official veterinary officer Frits Sluyter warned in a statement.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said on Thursday that horses infected with piroplasmosis would definitely be barred from taking part in the three-day event competition at the Summer Games in Atlanta.

Strict conditions have also been imposed on infected horses taking part in the jumping and dressage events.

"If veterinary authorities or agricultural departments are not willing to give competition horses special consideration with regard to their health requirements, the allocation of international equestrian events to certain geographic areas could become very difficult," Sluyter said.

Sluyter admitted the chances of obtaining a waivers for the three-day event were remote, but said waivers had been granted for several international equestrian events in the past.

He said it had not been an issue before because infected horses had competed in countries where the disease already existed.

European Commission officials have noted that piroplasmosis — although rare — already exists in the U.S.

Because Olympic competition is set to take place during the tick population's summer peak, Georgia state officials and local horse owners fear piroplasmosis could be spread.

Sluyter stressed that piroplasmosis could not be spread from horse to horse, but had to pass through a parasite — the tick.

"If we could prevent ticks from feeding on an infected horse, the chances for the disease to spread are virtually zero," he said. "Unfortunately the discussions... have moved from a veterinary issue towards an emotional and political debate."

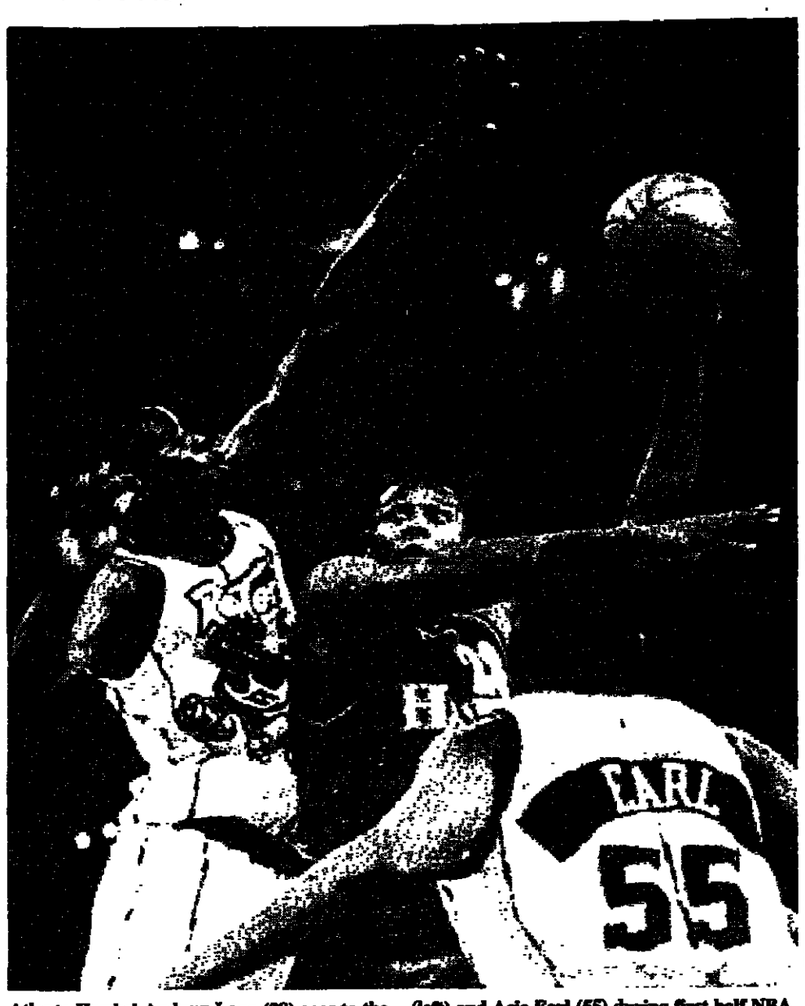
Commission veterinary experts have said that the risk of the spread could be reduced simply by washing infected horses with the insecticide acaricide.

The current ban on the three-day event would hit riders from Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

The FEI, based in Lausanne, Switzerland, has said 23 animals infected with the virus were listed as possible entries for the Summer Games, nine of them for the three-day event.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International Office of Epizootics (OIE) are also involved in the discussions.

Sluyter said that the OIE, which has listed piroplasmosis as a less serious B category disease, has modified its animal health code allowing countries to import seropositive competition horses under certain conditions.



Atlanta Hawks' Andrew Lang (28) goes to the hoop against Toronto Raptors' Ed Pinckney (left) and Acie Earl (55) during first half NBA action in Toronto (Reuters photo)

Knicks extend win streak over Celtics

BOSTON (R) — The old Knicks-Celtics hatred, dormant for a while now, may have just heated up again.

New York ran its win streak against its former nemesis to 13 with a 105-92 victory Friday, and added insult to injury by snapping Boston guard Dana Barros's record streak of three-pointer games in the process.

Patrick Ewing scored 37 points and Anthony Mason added 21 as the Knicks used a 21-15 fourth quarter to seal the win. Ewing had 13 rebounds and Mason added 10 for New York, which has not lost to the Celtics since January 10, 1993.

Dino Radja had 24 points and 11 rebounds for Boston, which lost for the 10th time in 13 games.

Barros saw his NBA record of consecutive games with a three-pointer end at 89. He missed three long-range attempts in the final seconds and nine overall.

Celtics coach M. L. Carr was angry at New York Coach Don Nelson for ordering a triple-team on Barros despite having a 13-point lead in the final eight seconds.

"Let's just say I didn't like the way things happened in the end," said Carr, who threw the ball at Nelson as both teams were filing into the locker room. "They had the win and needed to move on. It was bush (league)."

"I thought it was in fun," Nelson said of Carr's ball-throwing. "He's a great guy."

Barros, who was held to eight points on 2-of-12 shooting, wasn't pleased.

"You know, I'm sad," Barros admitted. "I wish it was still going on. Tonight was just something I never wanted it to be. I never wanted to be running out there at the end of the game, trying to get a three.

"But I think the way they did it, our coach got mad and my teammates got mad, so I didn't just say 'forget it' because of all of the stuff they did."

In Phoenix, Tony Dumas scored a career-high 39 points and Jason Kidd got his sixth career triple double with a season-high 33 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds as the Dallas Mavericks beat the Suns 140-130 in overtime.

The Suns, who lost their fifth in six games, played without forward Charles Barkley and guard Kevin Johnson.

At Los Angeles, Vlade Divac scored six of his 25 points in the final 3:32 as the Lakers squeezed out a 101-100 victory over the Houston Rockets.

Divac added 11 rebounds and Eddie Jones and Nic Van Exel scored 23 and 20 points for Los Angeles, which beat Houston for the sixth time in seven regular-season meetings.

Sam Cassell had 27 points and 10 assists and Hakeem Olajuwon added 24 points and eight rebounds for Houston, which played without forward Robert Horry.

The Rockets lost for the third time in four games.

In Orlando, Dennis Scott scored a season-high 37 points, including a three-pointer with 36 seconds left that put the Magic ahead for good, in a 93-88 win over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Penny Hardaway added 30 points for Orlando, which extended its regular-season home winning streak to 27 games. The Magic are 9-1 in their last 10 games.

Orlando was playing without centre Shaquille O'Neal (bruised quadricep) and forward Horace Grant, who was put on the injured list with a stress fracture in his left lower leg.

Glenn Robinson had 31 points and 11 rebounds and Vin Baker added 29 and 11 for Milwaukee, which has lost four straight.

At New Jersey, Derrick Alston scored a career-high 23 points and Vernon Maxwell added 21 as the Philadelphia 76ers routed the Nets 107-80 for their second win in 10 games.

Derrick Coleman, who came from the Nets in a six-player deal involving Shawn Bradley, missed his return to New Jersey with a sprained ankle. Bradley scored just four points.

At Utah, David Robinson had 28 points and 15 rebounds as the San Antonio Spurs rallied for a 101-94 win over the Jazz.

The Spurs won in Utah for just the fourth time in the last 33 trips.

Jeff Hornacek had 29 points and 11 assists and Karl Malone added 23 points and 11 rebounds for Utah.

In Denver, Dale Ellis scored 20 points and Bryant Stith netted six of his 12 points in the final 2:02 to lead the Nuggets to a 90-83 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

The Nuggets have won three straight while Cleveland has lost two in a row.

In Seattle, Shawn Kemp scored 27 points as the Supersonics, 14-1 at home this season, pounded the Miami Heat 113-81.

Miami, led by Alonzo Mourning's 29 points, lost its third straight and fell below the .500 mark (16-17) for the first time this season.

In Vancouver, Latrell Sprewell scored 25 points and Rony Seikaly added 19 and 16 rebounds as the Golden State Warriors beat the Grizzlies 104-95.

At Washington, Juwan Howard scored a season-high 29 points and Gheorghe Muresan scored 18 and grabbed 16 rebounds as the Bullets handed the Sacramento Kings their third straight road defeat, 117-88.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Forget through to semis

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Guy Forget beat second seed Mali Vai Washington in the quarter-finals of the New Zealand Open men's tennis tournament here Saturday. The unseeded French player took out Washington 7-6, 6-2 in a match halted three times by rain. He is now due to meet fifth seeded New Zealander Brett Steven in the semi-finals Sunday. Also in the last four are eighth seed Czech Jiri Novak and Argentine's Javier Frana. The match began Friday night but was held over to Saturday with veteran Forget leading 6-5 in the first set.

Rosset out of Australian Open

MELBOURNE (R) — Marc Rosset of Switzerland, seeded 13th for the Australian Open starting on Monday, withdrew on Saturday because of the hand injury he suffered punching an advertising sign during the Hopman Cup team final last week. Rosset's seeded position in the draw will be filled by Austrian world number 19 Gilbert Schaller, who was the next highest ranked player not to be seeded. Schaller's original position in the draw will go to a lucky loser from the qualifying rounds, who will be named on Monday.

Gazza given 2 match UEFA ban

GLASGOW (AFP) — England and Rangers midfielder Paul Gascoigne was handed a two-match European suspension for next season by UEFA on Friday. The England star was sent off after receiving two yellow cards in a 2-2 draw with Borussia Dortmund in Germany in December. Now he will be banned for two matches if, as expected, Rangers enter European competition at the start of next season.

Brazil beat Canada 4-1

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Brazil opened its Gold Cup campaign with a comfortable 4-1 win over Canada here on Friday. The world champions led the Group B game 2-0 within seven minutes, Andrew Luis scoring an individual goal and Caio, put away by Arilson, adding the second. Canada, who beat Honduras 3-1 in their first outing, had to wait until the last quarter before Thomas Radzinski pulled one back. Leandro, who came on as a substitute after 75 minutes, restored Brazil's two-goal advantage just before the final whistle from a cross from the right.

Coulthard to stay with McLaren-Mercedes

ESTORIL (AFP) — David Coulthard confirmed here Friday he would see out his contract with McLaren-Mercedes, despite Jackie Stewart's overtures aimed at getting him on board in a future Stewart Grand Prix team. Coulthard broke off from training with team technical consultant Alain Prost to tell reporters he intended to stay with McLaren as long as possible.

Russians strike over wages

SARATOV, Russia (AFP) — The Russian ice hockey league Friday cancelled a match between Dinamo Moscow and Kristal Saratov and awarded Moscow a 5-0 win after Kristal players refused to turn up in protest at no-payment of wages. "We had a team meeting yesterday afternoon," explained Kristal forward Sergei Zhubrovsky. "The unanimous decision of our team was to go on strike because we have not been paid any money for almost four months." The player strike was the first in the history of Soviet-Russian ice hockey since its inception in 1946. Zhubrovsky blamed the city and regional administration — Kristal's financial backers — for not paying players' salaries.

Dobrovolsky mulls Everton move

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian international Igor Dobrovolsky is mulling a move to Everton, where he would link up with national teammate Andrei Kanchelskis Sports-Express magazine reported here Friday. "Nothing has been decided yet over by joining Everton," said Dobrovolsky, currently with CSKA Moscow. "My manager told me that Everton is interested in my services. But right now I belong to CSKA." Dobrovolsky said he would join CSKA's winter training camp in Spain next week, but did not rule out having talks with Everton over a possible move.

Australian Open tennis profiles

MELBOURNE (AFP) — The leading contenders in the men's and women's singles at the Australian Open tennis championships starting here Monday.

*☆ **Pete Sampras**, USA: Finished 1995 as world No. 1 after claiming Wimbledon (beating Boris Becker) and the U.S. Open (Andre Agassi). He started the year as runnerup to Agassi at the Australian Open. Won three other titles, Indian Wells (Agassi), Queen's (Guy Forget), and Paris (Becker) and lost three other finals. Third best match record of 72-16. Power serve his best weapon, but has great array of groundstrokes and unflappable temperament. Won the 1994 Australian Open, finaliset '95 and semi-finalist '93.*

Age: 24. Right-hander. World ranking: 1. Grand Slams: 7. Australian Open match record: 21-4.

*☆ **Andre Agassi**, USA: Deprived by chest muscle injury of No. 1 ranking at year's end after holding down top spot for 30 consecutive weeks. Swept to victory at last year's Australian Open, beating Sampras, for his thrid GS title. Won career-high seven titles in 11 finals and a personal best 73-9 match record last season. The only player on tour not to lose an opening-round match last year. Charismatic player who possesses one of the best returning games in tennis.*

Age 25. Right-hander. World ranking: 2. Grand Slams: 3. Australian Open match record 7-0.

*☆ **Thomas Muster**, Austria: Dominated the clay court season winning a career-high 12 titles from 14 finals and finished the year at No. 3. During April-July he strung together the season-best 35 consecutive match victories and enjoyed a match record of 86-18. Broke through for his first Grand Slam at the French Open, beating Michael Chang. On target to take over the world No. 1 in early stages of '96. Best Australian Open performance was reaching the semi-final in '89 and a quarter-finalist '94. Fetish trainer and has 14-7 five-set record.*

Age 28. Left-hander. World ranking: 3. Grand Slams 1. Australia Open match record 15-7.

*☆ **Boris Becker**, Germany: Finished in top five for 9th time in last decade and capped the year by claiming his second ATP world championship title beating Michael Chang in Frankfurt. Won Marseilles beating Daniel Vacek. Reached Wimbledon final where he lost to Pete Sampras — his first GS final in four years. Ranks fourth behind Pete Sampras in career prize money ($19.5 million).*

Age 28. Right-hander. World ranking: 4. Grand Slams: 5. Australian Open match record: 22-8.

*☆ **Michael Chang**, USA: Outstanding retriever who has amazing on-court speed. Became the youngest Grand Slam champion at 17 when he won the 1989 French Open champion. Won 4 titles last year and making his fourth trip to Australian Open. Beat Michael Stich and Sergi Bruguera on way to French Open final where he lost to Thomas Muster and lost to Becker in ATP Tour World Championship in Frankfurt. Semi-finalist (lost to Sampras) here last year.*

Age 23. Right-hander. World ranking: 5. Grand Slams: 1. Australian Open match record 8-3.

*☆ **Yevgeny Kafelnikov**, Russia: The first Russian to finish in top 10 last year and played most matches (105) last season. Won four titles and helped his country into Davis Cup final against USA, losing 3-2 in Moscow. Reached semi-final of French Open after beating Agassi in quarter-final, before going out to eventual champion Muster. Had 73-32 match record last year.*

Age 21. Right-hander. World ranking: 6. Grand Slams: 0. Australian Open match record 5-2.

*☆ **Monica Seles**, USA: Three-time winner here and playing her fourth tournament since her well-documened stabbing during a Hamburg tournament in April, 1993. Undefeated in 21 matches and bookmakers have her odds-on to continue in the same vein. Beaten by Steffi Graf at last year's U.S. Open, but didn't drop a set in leadup to Flushing Meadow Final.*

Age: 22. Left-hander. World ranking: Equal one (with Graf). Grand Slams: 8. Australian Open match record: 21-0.

*☆ **Conchita Martinez**, Spain: Ultra-consistent year with semi-final appearances in all four Grand Slams, but missed out on a final appearance. Finished year ranked 2nd and looking for her second Grand Slam title after upsetting Graf at Wimbledon in 1994 to become the first Spanish woman to win there in the Open era.*

Age: 23. Right-hander. World ranking: 2. Grand Slams: 1. Australian Open match record: 27-5.

*☆ **Arantxa Sanchez Vicario**, Spain: Effervescent campaigner who lost last year to Steffi Graf at the French and Wimbledon and to Mary Pierce at the Australian Open. Finished the year ranked at No. 3. Popular with the crowds and possesses great ability to keep ball in play with her retrieving. In five Australian Open visits has always reached the semis.*

Age: 24. Right-hander. World ranking: 3. Grand Slams: 3. Grand Slams: 3. Australian Open match record: 27-5.

*☆ **Mary Pierce**, France: Broke through for her maiden Grand Slam title when she beat Arantxa Sanchez Vicario in last year's Australian Open final, but other '95 Grand Sham form was moderate — fourth round at French, second round (to Nathalie Tauziat) at Wimbledon and third round at U.S Open.*

Age: 21. Right-hander. World ranking: 4. Grand Slams: 1. Australian Open match record: 14-2.

*☆ **Kimiko Date**, Japan: The first Japanese woman to break into top 10 and best performance last season was reaching the French Open semi-finals where she lost to Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.*

Age: 25. Right-hander. World ranking: 5. Grand Slams: 1. Australian Open match record 12-6.

EU threatens German clubs over Bosman

AMBURG (AFP) — The European Commission on Friday threatened Germany's 36 professional football clubs with sanctions if they did not abide by last month's European Court of justice ruling on foreign players.

The clubs decided last Sunday to maintain the ceiling of three foreign players per game as laid down by European football authority UEFA rather than scrap the limit mid-season.

Europe threw out the restriction in the wake of the Bosman transfer ruling four weeks ago when the court judged it constituted a breach of EU law on freedom of movement within the European Union.

European Commissioner Karel Van Miert said on German television that "discussions will soon take place on this issue with the European Football Union (UEFA). We will do all in our power to impose the consequences of the ruling, if necessary by imposing fines," Van Miert said.

The threat also applies to UEFA itself, with the body's president Lennart Johansson maintaining that the three foreigners' rule must still apply in European club competition.

UEFA claims such competitions are an exception in that teams compete in them specifically as representatives of their respective nation.

UEFA and world football authority FIFA are to meet in Zurich on Monday in an effort to find a solution to the problem.

2 top-ranked sprinters help launch indoor season

HAMILTON (R) — The two top-ranked sprinters in the world will go head-to-head on the boards here, but there's more than money at stake.

World outdoor champion Donovan Bailey and world indoor Champion Bruny Surin both want recognition in Canada, their adopted country, which they now call home.

Bailey, born in Jamaica, and Surin, born in Haiti, were one-two in the 100 metres at the Gothenberg World Championships last year, and head the line-up for the opening Grand Prix event of the 1996 athletics season.

There are nine Grand Prix events from which athletes accumulate points that they take into the finals in Atlanta at the end of an indoor season that marks the start of the serious run-up to the summer Olympics.

The Hamilton Spectator Games launches a season that Bailey, 28, and Surin, also 28, hope will bring the recognition that has so far eluded them at home.

The lack of recognition — or acceptance by the Canadian public and sponsors — is considered by some a holdover from the disgrace of Canadian Ben Johnson, whose 100 metre world record and 1988 Olympic gold medal were taken from him because he wa caught using steroids.

On the surface, Bailey and Johnson have much in common. Both sprinters chose Canada as home, both are Jamaican by birth and both have Adonis-like builds.

That Johnson was pumped up with illegal steroids has apparently left an unpleasant legacy for Bailey.

Bailey has only just landed his first major sponsor although he's world champion and also won gold as anchor for Canada's 4×100 relay team at the World Championships.

Bailey says he is accepted and recognised all over the world. However, in Canada there's virtually no recognition.

He hopes that if he wins consistenly this year and takes the Olympic 100, he will finally be embraced.

Bailey faces a huge task at these games because not only is Surin, the world 5-metre indoor champion, racing but so is American Maurice Greene.

On top of that there is the added pressure of $20,000 in prize money to the top sprinters over three races: The 50 here, the 50 in Saskatoon on Sunday and the 50 in Montreal next Friday.

The lowest cumulative time over the three races will earn the athlete $10,000 first-place money.

In the women's 50, Americans will undoubtedly dominate, with two members of the 4×100 world champion U.S. relay team taking part. Carlette Guidry and Celina Mondie-Milner are aiming for Atlanta and hoping to add individual medals to the golds earned as members of the U.S. relay team last year.

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL: 634144
PHILADELPHIA
Pierce Brosnan as James Bond 007 in
GOLDENEYE
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:05, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.

CINEMA TEL: 699238
PLAZA
POCAHONTAS
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5 p.m.
Sylvester Stallone....in
JUDGE DREDD
Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 677420
CONCORD
CONCORD "1"
* ACE VENTURA "2"
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:30, 10:30
CONCORD "2"
* Batman Forever
Shows: 3:30, 8:30
* ASSASSINS
Shows: 6, 10:30

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Nabielah Oubeed / Farrouq Feeshawi .. In
Atabeht Al Settat
(Ladie's Step)
(Arabic)
Shows: 12:30, 3, 5:30, 8, 10:30

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TEL: 625155
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"Ahlan Tatbie"
Welcome Normalisation
Shows: 8:30 p.m.
For reservation call 625155

هكذا من الأصل

Seles reaches final as Martin wins

SYDNEY (AFP) — Lucky Monica Seles had a tough day Saturday in the Sydney International to get through to the women's singles final, while Todd Martin beat Goran Ivanisevic in a hard fought game to take the men's trophy.

In a match saw both players turn their game up to full volume in preparation for the upcoming Australian Open, Martin, the number-five seed, beat Ivanisevic at his own game, undaunted by the top seed's aggressive service game and 23 aces registering up to 212 kilometres (131 miles) per hour.

"I'm ready to cause trouble in the Australian Open," Ivanisevic said after the 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 match, which he said was his best of the week, despite the loss.

Martin agreed, tipping the Croatian as the player to watch out for at the Grand Slam event which begins Monday.

"Goran will be dangerous at the Open — his type of game can cause problems for everyone," he said.

Ivanisevic said his American opponent "never gave me a chance," as he delivered 14 aces and dropped just one point in his five service games in the third set.

He said Martin had changed his style from their encounter at the lucrative Grand Slam Cup in Munich last month — where a victorious Ivanisevic managed to shock Martin's lightening serves.

This time around, he said, Martin's delivery was slower but more effective — slicing and spinning its way across the court and very difficult to return.

Martin said he would have felt very optimistic about the Australian Open with or without the victory, and put his fine performance down to not thinking about things too much."

Todd Martin (left) of the U.S. holds up the mens singles trophy after he defeated Goran Ivanisevic (right) of Croatia at the Sydney International tennis tournament on Saturday. Martin defeated Ivanisevic 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 (Reuters photo)

Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands throws her racket during her semi final match against the world co-number one player Monica Seles of the U.S. in Sydney International Tennis Open Jan. 13 (Reuters photo)

Number one seed Seles said her victory over Brenda Schultz—McCarthy's blistering service game sometimes owed as much to luck as skill.

Seles beat the Dutch player 7-6 (8/6), 6-4, her fourth narrow victory over the big server who holds the womens world record with a 1899 kilometres per hour (118 miles per hour) scorcher.

Seles said Schultz-McCarthy, who at 188 centimetres towers over the 179 centimetre top seed, was consistently the hardest server on the tour.

"I tried not to look at the speedometer but curiosity got the better of me sometimes," she said, adding that seeing speeds approaching the world record made her suspect she was in for a difficult time.

She said Schultz-McCarthy had literally stretched her to the limit and the double-fister had been forced into playing single-handed backhanders.

Schultz-McCarthy had a false start to the match, claiming just two points in the first three games, but she gave the top seed a tough time for the rest of the set, eventually losing the tie break after two double faults.

Seles admitted she was very fortunate to win the first set.

"That tie breaker was pure luck," she said.

The Saydney tournament is just the third for Seles since she was stabbed by a crazed fan at the Citizen Cup in Hamburg in April, 1993, and she said Saturday she estimated she was only 80 per cent fit.

But the world number one insisted she was feeling very well this week and that the tough match was ideal preparation, both for the finals Sunday and the Australian Open which begins Monday.

Seles now faces American Lindsay Davenport in the finals, after Davenport beat Kimio Date of Japan 6-3, 6-7 (6-7), 6-3.

An injury cost Date the semi-final encounter, after she slipped over ion the second game of the last set and pulled a muscle in here left hip.

The number two was said the injury was more distracting than painful, and would not pose a threat to her performance in the Australian Open.

Weah's absence unlikely to cause too many problems

ROME (R) — Italian league leaders AC Milan are likely to make light of the absence of European and FIFA player of the year, Liberian George Weah, when they visit bottom-of-the-table cremonese on Sunday.

Milan come into the game three points clear of second placed Fiorentina, with Parma two points further back and Juventus fourth on 27 points, six behind the leaders.

Weah is playing for Liberia in the African Nations' Cup in South Africa and will be replaced by Marco Simone, who will join Roberto Baggio and Montenegrin Dejan Savicevic up front.

Weah's enforced absence also means croat Zvonimir Boban can return as the third foreigner along with Frenchman Maacel Desailly and Savicevic.

Midfielder Boban acknowledges that Milan will have to play a different game without the Liberian.

"George is the only central target man in the Milan attack, without him, there's no point in knocking high balls and long balls into the penalty area, we'll have to play a quicker game, keeping the ball on the ground."

Cremonese, beaten in three of their last five games and bottom of the table with 10 points, field an international attack of Italo-Australian John Aloisi and Slovene Matjaz Florjancic.

Second placed Fiorentina, at home to Piacenza, received good news during the week when it was revealed that their Argentine striker Gabriel Batistuta will not need an immediate operation on an ankle problem.

Batistuta joins Francesco Baiano, Anselmo Robbiati and Portugal's Rui Costa in a powerful Fiorentina attack.

Piacenza, fourth from bottom on 16 points, are the only serie a side without foreigners and rely on the native talent of Nicola Caccia, scorer of nine goals this season.

Of the leading sides, perhaps Juventus have the hardest task at home to a Bari side still exultant following a 4-1 home win against Internazionale last weekend.

Inter will be hoping to recover from that setback when they face AS Roma at the San Siro.

Englishman Paul Ince, suspended against Bari, returns to partner Italian international Nicola Berti and Argentine Javier Zanetti in midfield with Brazilian Roberto Carlos in defence.

Roma, held to a 2-2 home draw by Fiorentina last week, welcome back defenders Ameded Carboni and Marco Lanna who both missed that game throiugh suspension.

Aldair, who will probably mark his former team mate Marco Branca, views the task with little enthusiasm:

"Marco is a difficult customer, technically he's one of the best strikers in Italian soccer."

Parma, at home to Cagliari, seem set to start with Alessandro Melli and Gianfranco Zola in attack.

Asian Squash Championship

Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore win

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Pakistan, Malaysia and Singapore all won their scheduled matches Saturday on the opening day of the team competition at the 8th Asian Squash Championship which concludes here Tuesday.

In Saturday's evening matches Malaysia beat Jordan 3-0, Pakistan beat Sri Lanka 3-0, Singapore defeated India 3-0 and Chinese Taipei beat Palestine 2-1.

In the morning schedule, India beat Palestine 3-0, Hong Kong beat Lebanon 3-0, Pakistan overcame Bahrain 3-0, Singapore defeated Taipei 3-0 and Malaysia beat S.Korea 3-0.

In women's matches, Hong Kong overcame Singapore 2-1 and Malaysia upset India with the same result.

Five Arab countries are among the 13 teams taking part in the competition underway. They represent Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Bahrain, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Taiwan, and Jordan.

Pakistan are the seven time winners of the competition and seem set to retain it again despite top seed Jansher Khan's withdrawal from the competition Wednesday citing backache.

Sunday's schedule

(Starting at 9:30 a.m.)
Sri Lanka-Bahrain
Kuwait-Lebanon
Jordan-South Korea
Palestine-Singapore

☆ Second round matches start at 5:30 p.m.

Valenciennes goes into liquidation

VALENCIENNES (R) — French club Valenciennes, victim of the Marseille bribery scandal almost three years ago, went into judicial liquidation on Friday, a decision likely to force them out of existence.

A Valenciennes court said the club, which has debts of 28 million francs ($5.7 million), had heavy liabilities and low prospects.

The club officials said that if the appeal was lost, they would not play strasbourg nor would they be able to fulfil the rest of their fixtures in the National 1 Division, the third flight in France.

Club president Marc Devaux said he was angered by the court ruling. "The decision is scandalous compared with the situation at Marseille where they had 250 million francs ($50 million) of debts but are still playing in the Second Division," he said.

Valenciennes's problems began in May 1993 when three of their players were offered a bribe to lose a game against Marseille.

The club were subsequently relegated and then went into receivership, resulting in another demotion.

Chang beats Kafelnikov to retain title

MELBOURNE (R) — World No. 5 Michael Chang finalised his preparations for the Australian Open by capturing his seccond successive Colonial Classic title with a straight sets victory over Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov on Saturday.

The 23-year-old American declared himself ready to mount a strong challenge to compatriots and tournament favourites Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi for the first Grand Slam title of the year which starts on Monday.

"I think I am a better player than I was last year," Chang told reporters after his 6-3, 6-1 defeat of Kafelnikov, an upset winner over Agassi on Friday, in hot and humid conditions at Kooyong.

"To come here and win three tough matches against Yevgeny, Stefan Edberg and Jim Courier is great for my confidence," said Chang.

"Hopefully I can go on now to the Australian Open and go two better than I did last year," said Chang, a semi-finalist at Flinders Park in 1995 before he lost to eventual runner-up Pete Sampras, the current world number one.

The American Davis Cup player insisted the gap between Sampras and Agassi, the world's number two ranked player and defending Australian Open champion, and their closest rivals could be bridged.

"I personally do not think that the gap is as wide as some people think it is," said Chang, who will meet David Rikl from the Czech Republic in the first round of the Australian Open before a scheduled semi-final showdown with Agassi.

Michael Chang of the U.S. holds the trophy after his win over Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov in the final of the Kooyong Classic in Melbourne (Reuters photo)

"Although Pete and Andre played very tough tennis last year, it does not mean that they are unbeatable. They are a little bit above the rest of us at the moment, but we are all working hard to knock them off."

Kafelnikov said he could not read too much into the result on Saturday because he was not trying as hard as he could.

"To be honest, I was not trying 100 per cent. It is to close to the open to give it 100 per cent," said the 21-year-old world number six.

Agassi claimed third place at Kooyong by beating compatriot Courier, the world number eight, 6-4, 6-2 later in the day.

"I thought I was moving very well and striking the ball cleanly," said Agassi, who added that he would benefit from the experience of competing at the Australian Open for the first time last year.

"I have become used to what to expect as far as the weather and courts are concerned. The fact that I have done it before helps give me confidence that I can go out and do it again."

2nd death on Dakar Rally

LABE, Guinea (Agencies) — A child was killed after running in front of a French competitor in the Dakar Rally on Friday, organisers said.

The accident, involving motorcycle rider Marcel Pillet, occurred in the village of Tarembali, near the end of the 517 km 13th stage from Kays in Mali to Labe in Central Guinea.

This latest fatality doubled the death toll in this year's desert marathon and took the total number of deaths in the 18-year history of the event to 33.

African Nations Cup

S. Africa win 3-0 in opening match

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) - South Africa lifted the nation once more with a resounding 3-0 thrashing of Cameroon in the opening match of the African Nations Cup here on Saturday.

Phil Masinga, David Williams and "Shoes" Moshoen all scored, and each time they found the net, the noise from Soweto, a sprawling black township and home to more than two million people, got louder and louder.

The celebrations in Soweto were not unlike the scenes in South Africa's victory in the rugby union World Cup final. Though this was only their first match, football is the common's man game in South Africa, which showed it the general jubilation.

People were dancing arm-in-arm, hugging and singing. There were car horns blaring. And one happy fan said: "It's just like Christmas Eve."

But the extent of the celebrations were not exaggerated considering the reality of South Africa's play.

Mark Fish, watched by Manchester United scouts at the FNB stadium on the edge of Soweto, was a pillar in defence and initiator of moves. Eric Tinkler continually proved his valuable skill-winning skills, and up front Phil Masinga played with all-consuming confidence.

Cameroon, lacking initiative and ideas near goal, and without the hard, almost ruthless defending that played a major part in their reaching the 1990 World Cup quarter-final, were a soft touch.

South Africa combined northern European strength with Latin flair and only later matches will show if it was Cameroon who allowed Bafana Bafana (The Boys, The Boys) the room to play.

South Africa were immediately on top from the whistle following a rousing speech by President Nelson Mandela moments before kick-off.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

♠Q632 ♡AQ5 ◇A98 ♣875

As dealer, what action do you take?

A - We know many players who would open this flat 12 points, but the hand has no redeeming feature. There are almost no intermediate cards and, should you choose to get the bidding started, you would have to open one club — a frightening prospect.

Q. 2 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:

♠AKJ105 ♡KQ5 ◇54 ♣KJ8

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	2◇	Pass	Pass
?			

What action do you take?

A - You have too good a hand to pass, yet you do not want to rebid a five-card spade suit, even one as good as yours. The only solution to the problem is to double, giving partner an added option of passing for penalties.

Q. 3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

♠K62 ♡AJ95 ◇K9 ♣8752

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	Pass	1♡	Pass
2♡	Pass	?	

What do you bid now?

A - You have enough to invite game, but you can't be sure that partner has four-card heart support. By bidding two no trump now, you describe a balanced hand of 11-12 points and only four hearts, and partner can decide what to do.

Q. 4 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:

♠AK10 8532 ♡8743 ◇Void ♣84

Partner opens the bidding with one club. What do you respond?

A - Obviously, it is a choice between one spade and three spades. With two possible defensive tricks, we prefer one spade to preemptive action that could suggest a weaker hand. Indeed, we feel you are good enough to make an invitational jump in spades at your next turn.

Q. 5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

♠AJ83 ♡A43 ◇J92 ♣962

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1NT	Pass	?	

What do you bid now?

A - Most players we know don't bother to check on a possible 4-4 major fit unless they have a ruffing value, so the majority would simply raise to three no trump. However, we won't fault you if you investigated by bidding two clubs. After all, four spades could be the better game.

Q. 6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

♠KQJ7543 ♡8 ◇Void ♣AKQ106

Partner opens the bidding with one diamond. What do you respond?

A - Two-suited hands are difficult to describe if you start with a jump shift. You will find that you usually save a whole level of bidding if you start with a simple response, then jump in your second suit. Bid one spade.

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Pope calls for international guarantees over Jerusalem

VATICAN (Agencies) — Pope John Paul said on Saturday Middle East peace could be dashed if differences persisted over the status of Jerusalem and called for international guarantees to preserve its multi-religious nature.

In an annual state of the world address, he voiced criticism of those countries which he said denied religious freedom and said African leaders would condemn their continent to pariah status unless they mended their ways.

His speech, to ambassadors from more than 160 countries that have relations with the Holy See, included a call for a swift end to nuclear testing just one week before a visit to the Vatican by French President Jacques Chirac.

The pontiff's audience in the Vatican's marble-lined and tapestried Sala Reggia included Israel's ambassador and, for the first time, a Palestinian representative.

Speaking in French, he said he hoped Israelis and Palestinians would live "from now on side by side, with one another, in peace mutual esteem and sincere cooperation."

"But allow me to confide that this hope could prove ephemeral if a just and adequate solution is not also found to the particular problem of Jerusalem," he said.

"The religious and universal dimension of the Holy City demands a commitment on the part of the whole international community, in order to ensure that the city preserves its uniqueness and retains its living character."

He warned that the holy places "would lose much of their significance if they were not permanently surrounded by active communities of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, enjoying true freedom of conscience and religion."

He said he hoped "the international community will offer the political partners most directly involved the juridical and diplomatic instruments capable of ensuring that Jerusalem, one and holy, may truly be a "crossroads of peace."

He noted that Jerusalem, sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, should be the subject of negotiations between Israel and the new Palestinian National Authority (PNA) during 1996.

The Vatican and Israel established full ties in 1994, ending centuries of often hostile Roman Catholic-Jewish relations.

Both sides are still formally at odds over the status of Jerusalem. Most countries including the Vatican do not recognise Israel's claim to Jerusalem as its "united and eternal capital" following "annexation" of the Arab eastern sector in 1980.

A suggestion last month by assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's widow, Leah, after she met the Pope that the Vatican had

Pope John Paul II

changed its position was swiftly quashed.

The Pope cited the Middle East, with Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Central America, which he will visit next month, as areas of conflict where a climate of peace was now advancing.

He said there were still "too many hotbeds of conflict, more or less disguised, which keep people under the unbearable yoke of violence, hatred, uncertainty and death."

He referred to Algeria, divided Cyprus, Afghanistan, Chechenya, Kashmir and Sri Lanka, East Timor and several African countries.

Taking up a theme he tackled on a visit to Africa last September, he said he was addressing the conscience of its leaders to be politically credible if they wanted outside aid.

"If you do not commit yourselves more resolutely to national democratic dialogue, if you do not more clearly respect human rights, if you do not strictly administer public funds and external credits, if you do not condemn ethnic ideology, the African continent will ever remain on the margins of the community of nations," he said.

On religious freedom, the Pope said some Muslim countries denied rights of worship to other faiths even in private.

"This is an intolerable and unjustifiable violation not only of all the norms of current international law, but of the most fundamental human freedom, that of practising one's faith openly, which for human beings is their reason for living."

In line with Vatican practice, he did not mention specific countries, an approach he also adopted in calling for an end "without delay" to nuclear testing.

Mr. Chirac, whose state visit next Saturday will be the first to the Vatican by a French president since 1959, has résumed nuclear testing in the South Pacific. He says France will join a comprehensive test ban when the current series ends.

PEACEKEEPING: Two British soldiers look out of the turret of a British battletank patrolling near the central Bosnian town of Mrkonji Grad. The soliders are members of the British unit taking part in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) peacekeeping force in former Yugoslavia. U.S. President Bill Clinton visited American units in the NATO force on Saturday (see story on page one) (AFP photo)

Egypt sends 6 more militants to gallows

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian military court on Saturday sentenced six militants to death for plotting to overthrow the government of President Hosni Mubarak and install a strict Islamic state.

The military court, located in the army barrack of Heikstep on the outskirt of Cairo, sentenced 12 other militants to jail, many with hard labour, and acquitted six others, court sources said.

The defendants, known as *Al Aedoon min Al Sudan* (Returnees from Sudan), were accused of possessing arms, explosives and detonators and of receiving military training in Pakistan, Sudan and Afghanistan to carry out "terrorist operations" in Egypt, kill officials and blow up the country's installations.

The 24 men were arrested in June while trying to reenter Egypt and are allegedly members of the violent group Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah.

Egyptian newspapers said in October the 24 were able to identify from photographs those who tried to kill President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa last June because they had met them before at a training camp in southern Khartoum.

The official Al Ahram newspaper said the men confessed they were trained in Sudan by prominent fugitive militant leader, Mustafa Hamza.

U.S. blocking aid initiatives – Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Saturday accused the United States of blocking aid initiatives for its people hit by more than five years of biting U.N. sanctions, as it prepared to welcome a French fact-finding mission.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahaf, quoted by newspapers here, hit out after U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright said her country was worried by the humanitarian situation in Iraq.

"Mrs. Albright's declaration is ironic for she must know that it is her country which is hindering all initiatives by members of the Security Council and Iraq to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people," he said.

His comments came as a French parliamentary team was due in Baghdad on Monday on an eight-day mission to "examine the conditions of application of U.N.. resolutions and to take stock of the situation in Iraq from the political and humanitarian point of view," French officials said Friday.

The three-strong team, led by former Foreign Minister Jean-Bernard Raimond, will be the first official French parliamentary delegation to Iraq since the 1991 Gulf war.

"This mission will be the chance to find out the effects of the international embargo that the United States wants to maintain," said Abdul Razak Al Hashimi, the last Iraqi ambassador to France before the two countries broke diplomatic ties in 1991.

In New York, the French mission at the United Nations said the visit had "nothing to do" with a French proposal to the Security Council for a mission by "an impartial authority" to study the impact of sanctions on the Iraqi people, which is still being discussed.

U.N. oil and trade sanctions were slapped on Baghdad in August 1990 following its invasion of Kuwait, and have crippled the country's economy.

Mr. Sahaf repeated Iraq's demands to be allowed to use assets frozen in foreign bank accounts "estimated at $4 billion to buy food and medicines" and called on the U.N. to ease "certain obstacles to importing basic foodstuffs."

But the United States has ruled out any pre-conditions for a possible U.N. fact-finding mission.

France last week suggested to the U.N. Security Council that a new, reliable report on the impact of sanctions on the Iraqi people be compiled by early March.

On Wednesday, Iraq asked the U.N. body to allow it to use assets frozen abroad to buy food and medical supplies.

Security Council members have continued informal talks over the week on details and responsibilities of such a fact-finding mission, sources here said.

A U.S. official who asked not to be named said such a mission could go ahead only in the absence of any preconditions, adding that the report requested by France should be as comprehensive as possible and address causes of the current situation.

Argentina 'knows nothing' of Iran 'plot'

CORRIENTIES (AFP) — Argentine President Carlos Menem said Saturday his government had received no information from Israel about a reported Iranian plot to assassinate Israel's ambassador to Buenos Aires.

Interior Minister Carlos Corach said security had been stepped up following the report Friday by Israeli state television, which cited an Iranian secret service document as the basis for its report.

The television said the Iranian secret services had drawn up a plan to attack seven sites in Israel where nuclear equipment is produced or stored, and that it also planned attacks against Jews or Israeli interests abroad.

Among those targeted were Israeli Ambassador to Argentina Yitzhak Aviram and the head of the Jewish community in Argentina, Ruben Beraja, it said.

"There has been no official communication from the Israeli government about a possible attack," Mr. Menem said at a news conference.

Bahrain summons cleric to warn against political use of mosques

MANAMA (Agencies) — The authorities in Bahrain summoned Shiite opposition leaders to the Interior Ministry on Saturday and ordered them to stop using mosques to "spread subversion" after a wave of unrest, officials said.

The main Shi'ite leader, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, and seven others were called to the ministry and threatened with legal action if they continued to use mosques to damage the country's "security and stability," an official said.

The Interior Ministry official, quoted by the state-run Gulf News Agency, said they had been summoned "in light of the recent incidents of rioting and sabotage which caused public panic and confusion."

He said the incidents included a blast in a shopping complex, arson, gas cannisters exploding, and rioting in the streets with attacks on pedestrians and motorists, the agency reported.

The authorities announced on Jan. 9 that three young Bahrainis had been arrested for setting off homemade explosive devices in two shopping centres in Manama on Dec. 31.

The summons of Sheikh Jamri came after riot police quelled fresh protests with tear-gas and rubber bullets on Friday night near Manama.

"Today the interior ministry summoned (Sheikh) Abdul Amir Al Jamri and seven other persons with him," the official from the ministry said.

"They were told that using mosques and religious occasions to incite disruption of security and stability and damaging the interests of the country and citizens is considered a clear violation of the law, and they must stop immediately from these practices or face legal actions."

The 57-year-old cleric, a former parliament member, was put under house arrest in May and jailed in April 1995 on charges of fanning anti-government riots. He was released in August.

One official told Reuters that Sheikh Jamri had been called in "just for a talk" and was then released.

Unrest among some of Bahrain's Shi'ite community, which comprises about 70 per cent of the population, against the Sunni-dominated government erupted in December 1994 after the arrest of another Shi'ite cleric, Sheikh Al Salman.

Sheikh Salman was arrested for distributing leaflets calling on the government to restore the parliament dissolved in 1975. He was later deported with three other clerics.

At least 13 civilians and three policemen have been killed in over a year of unrest.

Fresh clashes erupted in an area near Manama's city centre on Friday night when a group of youths tried to gather at a mosque which the authorities had sealed off after the noon Friday prayers were held without incident.

Traffic was brought to a standstill. Bystanders watching the protesters chanting in the streets said the outbreak took place because Sheikh Jamri had been scheduled to hold a sermon in the Sadiq Mosque, about two kilometres from the city centre.

There has been no official word on whether there were any wounded or arrested in the clash, which ended in less than two hours. Residents reported that clashes took place in other areas.

During Friday noon prayers in the Shi'ite village of Duraz, 10 kilometres outside of Manama, Sheikh Jamri had called for the release of detainees in a sermon to thousands of worshippers, who later dispersed peacefully.

In his village of Bani Jamra, he said the opposition was seeking a "Western-style" elected parliament.

Algerian-French relations are improving, Paris press reports

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Relations between France and Algeria, strained during the recent presidential vote here, warmed after a meeting of the country's foreign ministers, press reports said here Saturday.

Ahmad Attaf met his French counterpart Herve de Charette in Paris on Thursday where world leaders gathered to pay their final respects to former French president Francois Mitterrand, who died Monday aged 79.

The daily Le Matin headlined its report "A new relationship" while the Arabic language dailay Al Khabar said the meeting was "the first step to an improvement in relations between Algeria and France."

Algeria, a former French colony which won independence in 1962 after a liberation war, remains heavily dependent on France as its main financier with Paris contributing credits of about five to six billion francs (about $1 billion)a year.

But relations strained during the Algerian presidential electoral campaign when Algeria accused Paris of "interference" after the French foreign ministry urged the country to hold legislative elections quickly after the November presidential ballot.

In December, French Parliament Speaker Philippe Seguin met Algerian President Liamine Zeroual here, but no details of that meeting were made public.

Mr. Zeroual was initially appointed to the presidency during Algeria's civil war between the military-backed authorities and armed extremists. The conflict erupted in early 1992 after the cancellation by the military of general elections the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win, and has claimed an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 lives.

The Algerian leader was officially sworn in late last year as the first democratically elected head of state after a poll held amid a massive security operation in spite of the conflict.

He is pursuing a dual strategy of cracking down on the armed gangs and seeking negotiations with fundamentalist politicians. Mr. Zeroual has told local officials to prepare for holding legislative elections but no date has been set.

In another development, security forces defused a bomb in a market place in central Algiers, the government daily Al Mujahid said Saturday.

Bomb attacks and assassinations by armed groups have increased in recent days in the run-up in Ramadan, the month of fasting which starts next week.

Militant rivalry

The leader of an Algerian guerrila faction says his followers killed two rebel rivals who tried to infiltrate his group and change its hardline stance in the country's civil strife, an Arabic newspaper reported on Saturday.

The London-based Al Hayat quoted a statement by the commander of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in which he took responsibility for killing Mohammad Said and Abdel Razak Redjam and a score of their followers.

The GIA is the most ruthless faction among the Algerian guerrilla organisations.

Abu Abdul Rahmane Amine's reported statement said the slain rival leaders from the Algerisation group had tried since May 1994 to infiltrate the GIA to alter its hardline policy of toppling the Algerian government by force and replacing it with a purist Islamic state.

"When God prevented them from achieving this and their scheme was uncovered, they tried ot divide the group and split the mujahedeen (holy fighters)...," the statement, quoted by Al Hayat, added.

The statement did not say when the purge took place but confirmed FIS statement last December blaming the GIA for killing in the previous month the two leaders and other militants.

GIA was also reported last week as declaring war on rival guerrilla faction, the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), to punish the FIS military wins for democratic leanings.

Accoridng to local official and media reports, several hundred guerrillas died in a feud between the AIS and GIA in the past two years while more than 1,000 disgruntled guerrillas have surrendered to the authorities since November.

Yilmaz balks at accepting to join coalition with Islamists

ANKARA (Agencies) — The head of Turkey's right-wing Motherland Party turned down Saturday an offer to join the pro-Islamic Weflare Party in a coalition, effectively scuttling the Islamists' chances of forming a government.

Speaking at a press conference after meeting with Prime Minister-designate Necmettin Erbakan, Mesut Yilmaz said his party would prefer to join a coalition with outgoing Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's True Path Party than partner the Welfare (Refah) in government.

"There are factors which would make cooperation with the Welfare Party difficult," said Mr. Yilmaz, the only party leader in Turkey's national assembly who had not ruled out collaboration with the Islamists, currently the largest party in the 550-seat parliament with 158 deputies after narrowly winning Dec. 24 parliamentary elections.

Although they agreed "on certain points... our programmes contain basic differences," in particular "on the role of the state in the economy and on Europe," he said.

The move would appear to scuttle effectively any chances Mr. Erbakan may have had of becoming Turkey's first pro-Islamic prime minister in the country's 73-year republican history.

Mr. Yilmaz was the only party leader who has remained open to the idea of a coalition with Welfare.

Mr. Yilmaz, whose Motherland Party is the third largest in parliament with 132 seats, made his announcement shortly after Ms. Ciller refused to join a government led by Mr. Erbakan.

Mr. Yilmaz said he wanted to try to forge a coalition with Ms. Ciller's party before holding any more coalition talks.

"There's a greater possibility of us coming to an agreement with the True Path Party's programme and basic targets," he told the news conference.

Mr. Yilmaz and Ms. Ciller have been trying to set up a conservative coalition with the backing of the left to thwart Welfare.

But a dispute over who would be prime minister in a coalition between them has hindered their attempt, to the frustration of the business community.

Mr. Yilmaz insisted that he could not serve under Ms. Ciller, Turkey's first woman prime minister who governed for more than two years until the Dec. 24 polls.

"If Ciller comes to us with a coalition offer that includes her as prime minister, then she will be responsible for the sabotage" of the planned alliance, he said.

Mr. Yilmaz, premier briefly in 1991, said differences over relations with the West and Welfare's plans for strict state control of the economy were the main sticking points with the Islamists.

Welfare, whose performance at the polls was the best by an Islamist party in modern Turkey's history, wants to renegotiate a customs union with the European Union and advocates a planned economy it says would be compatible with Islam.

The Welfare and the Motherland together have a fragile total of 290 seats, only 14 more than the absolute majority, and Mr. Yilmaz could have faced embarrassing defections from more liberal members of his party if he agreed to the coalition with the fundamentalists.

SLA head ordered to appear in Beirut court

BEIRUT (R) — A Beirut military magistrate has ordered the chief of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia to appear before him for interrogation on charges of collaborating with Israel, judicial sources said on Saturday.

They said military investigating Judge Riad Talee ordered SLA commander Antoine Lahd, a 69-year-old retired Lebanese army officer, to show up in his office on Tuesday for interrogation on several charges that carry the death penalty.

Mr. Lahd commands the 3,000-man SLA, which helps 1,000 Israeli troops patrol an anti-guerrilla buffer zone in South Lebanon.

One source said military prosecutor Nasri Lahoud charged Mr. Lahd this week with "conscripting into hostile army, carrying weapons on Israel's side and aiding it to strip off a part of Lebanese territory from state sovereignty using violence."

Other charges against Mr. Lahd were "undertaking acts of violence, heading an

(Continued on page 7)

COLUMN

French rains shut airport, force evacuations

NICE, France (R) — Torrential rains forced the closure of Cannes Airport on the French riviera and rising rivers forced about 260 families to flee their homes, officials said. In the area around Cannes-Mandelieu Airport, about 18,000 homes had electricity supplies cut off for most of the day because streets in some villages were under a metre of water. Most of those evacuated lived in Villeneuve-Loubet between Nice and Cannes but the residents fled inland from about 30 villas near Grasse, a centre of France's perfume industry. Rains and mudslides cut roads further west. A farm family of four had to be evacuated by helicopter after their home was flooded by the Argens River near Frejus. In the Alps, a skier was missing in a blizzard at the Isola 2000 resort. Throughout the southern Alps, there was a danger of avalanches.

U.K. golfer gives gallery $15m surrealist art

EDINBURGH (R) — A former champion woman golfer has bequeathed her £10 million ($15.5 million) collection of surrealist art to Scotland's National Gallery of National Art, officials said. Gabrielle Keiller, who died last month aged 87, had amassed 136 sculptures, paintings, prints and drawings by artists like Salvador Dali, Paul Delvaux, Max Ernst and Rene Magritte. She requested that the gallery keep the works together. "We propose to honour her wishes," said curator Richard Calvocoressi. Key works will be exhibited later this year while the entire collection will be shown in 1997.

Hungary king, queen to join hands after 1000 years

BUDAPEST (R) — Hungary is seeking a bone from the right hand of its first queen, Gisela, to lay it next to the hand of her husband for celebrations of the 1000th anniversary of their royal marriage on May 4. Gisela lies buried in the cloister of Passau in Germany, far from her legendary husband Saint Istvan (Stephen) whose right hand, as a relic, leads religious processions in Hungary every year on Aug. 20, the founding day of the kingdom of Hungary. "We would like to get the bone soon so as to get the shrine ready in time for celebrations of Hungary's first royal marriage," said Jozsef Szendi, the Bishop of Veszprem.

Peter Ustinov to visit Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — British actor Sir Peter Ustinov will visit Cambodia next month in his capacity as a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the organisation said. Ustinov, 75, who has appeared in more than 30 movies, will come to Cambodia on Feb. 16 after he completes a documentary film being shot in Burma, UNICEF said. The actor will stay in Cambodia until Feb. 20, visiting UNICEF-aided projects and meeting government officials who deal with issues relating to children, it said.